Introduction and Comments

James Johnson

The masthead of *Perspectives* articulates our mission in these words: "*Perspectives on Politics* is a journal of political science that seeks to provide political insight on important problems, as it emerges from rigorous, broad based, and integrative thought." Although I inherited this mission statement, I find it broadly in keeping with my own aspirations for the journal. I also recognize that there are broad and deep disagreements among political scientists about such things as what counts as "political," what is "important," whether the discipline ought to be driven by "problems," and what it means to be "rigorous," to say nothing of "broad" or "integrative." Indeed, it might fairly be said that the journal itself exists in large measure as a result of the ferment generated by such disagreement.

My own hope is that *Perspectives* will serve as a forum for exploring our multiple disagreements in ways that make them clearer and so, potentially at least, more productive. Toward that end I plan to organize a symposium comprised of several dozen very brief contributions addressing the questions "What is Politics? What is Important?" The plan is to solicit contributions from a range of scholars at different sorts of institution, at different ranks, with different substantive interests and methodological allegiances. I anticipate that the answers we receive will diverge quite widely and I hope that such divergence will encourage further reflection and disagreement on what I take to be foundational questions for the discipline. I will discuss this symposium again as the plans for it move closer to realization. More immediately, this issue of *Perspectives* contains a set of papers that raise and answer such questions by example. They address problems of citizenship and how it is legally defined and extended, the variety of roles religion may play in political mobilization, how security is provided and what happens when it is not, and, finally, the vicissitudes of efforts at reform within government and at the grassroots. In their different ways, each of these provocative papers illustrates how we can provide "political insight on important problems" in ways that might not fit quite so comfortably in the more familiar confines of standard professional research journals.

Marc Morjé Howard addresses variations in citizenship, focusing primarily on the countries of the European Union. In particular, he highlights the perplexing pattern that successful efforts to liberalize the legal criteria governing access to citizenship generally emerge not from public mobilization (which, often orchestrated by right-wing parties or movements, typically sustains resistance to liberalization) but instead from elites through processes that seem, by comparison, non-democratic.

Carolyn Warner and Manfred Wenner also focus on European politics and in particular on the politics of religious diversity. They hope to allay common apprehensions that Islam may afford its adherents a basis for a unified political movement in Europe, one that would pose a standing threat to Western culture and civilization. They depict the Muslim population of Europe as variegated in part because of the decentralized, non-hierarchal organizational structure of its faith but also due to both doctrinal differences and ethnic diversity. According to Warner and Wenner, this heterogeneity, encouraged in part by European institutional arrangements that incorporate constitutional protections for religious practice, makes it unlikely that such a unified Islamic movement can emerge. They warn in closing, though, of a quite different predicament that this same heterogeneity makes possible; it may invite members of smaller-scale, sectarian groups onto the path of radicalism.

Anna Seleny pursues the analysis of Islam and politics in a way that directly addresses this latter threat. In the process she leaves Europe, if not "western" apprehensions, behind. Seleny argues that the decentralized, pragmatic, pluralist character of Islam facilitates what she calls a "reverberation effect," allowing Islamist activists to amplify their own interpretation of the faith and its political implications. By contrast, secularist forces have, for various reasons she identifies, been unsuccessful in doing the same. Seleny offers a comparative perspective on this predicament and holds out hope that pro-democratic Muslims can indeed draw upon those very same features of the Islamic tradition to articulate a political vision of pluralism and tolerance.

In recent years western preoccupations with Islam have been driven to a significant degree by widespread concerns about security. The next two papers directly address this perennial problem of politics. Deborah Avant notes that in the contemporary world security increasingly is provided not by states, but by a wide variety of private suppliers who sell their services to a panoply of private,

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governmental, and non-governmental entities. She argues that while "marketized" security may afford a state with an attractive short-term policy tool, enhancing its flexibility and capacity, such a policy option may in the longer run alter patterns of domestic support as well as the types and incidence of political conflict. She traces the implications of this trend for what we have learned about international conflict and state building.

Ronald Inglehart, Mansoor Moaddel, and Mark Tessler approach the politics of security from a different angle. Whereas Avant is concerned with changes in the ways security is provided, they worry instead about what happens when it is not. To this end they examine the consequences that extreme insecurity can have on members of a population. They argue that "existential insecurity," persistent fear for one's own survival, generates patterns of xenophobia and group solidarity that subvert attitudes embodying tolerance, readiness to accept social change, and support for democracy. Relying on a survey recently conducted in Iraq, they identify a strong connection between a deep, pervasive insecurity among Iraqis attributable to their extended experience of dictatorship, war, and terrorism and comparatively high levels of xenophobia and exclusive patterns of identification. They conclude that, to the extent that they inform political behavior, such attitudes plausibly will present a standing hindrance to the prospects for stable, effective democratic politics in Iraq.

The final pair of papers in this issue turn to the politics of democratic reform and citizenship in the United States. Clarence Stone, Donn Worgs, and Marion Orr argue that political reform is animated not simply by interests but by ideas or, what they call "purpose." Using the experience of education reform in a set of American cities as a vehicle, they show not just the importance of purpose to reform, but the difficulties involved in sustaining some purpose given the exigencies of collective action and the pressure of competing purposes.

Finally, in a review essay on studies of the Industrial Areas Foundation (IAF), Romand Coles examines the purposes of that longstanding grassroots organization. He highlights the tensions the IAF has exploited as it pursues a vision of democracy and justice. In the process, Coles offers considerable insight into the perplexities and apparent inconstancy inherent in this political strategy.

Notes from the Managing Editor

Forthcoming

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

Rawi Abdelal, Yoshiko M. Herrera, Alastair Iain Johnston, and Rose McDermott. "Identity as a Variable."

Joel A. Johnson. "A Connecticut Yankee in Saddam's Court: Mark Twain on Benevolent Imperialism."

Peter J. Katzenstein and Timothy A. Byrnes. "Transnational Religion in an Expanding Europe."

David S. Meyer and Steven A. Boutcher. "Signals and Spillover: *Brown v. Board of Education* and Other Social Movements."

Patrick Thaddeus Jackson and Stuart J. Kaufman. "Security Scholars for a Sensible Foreign Policy: A Study in Weberian Activism."

Darel E. Paul. "Teaching Political Economy in Political Science: A Review of International and Comparative Political Economy Syllabi."

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