Review Editor's Introduction

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As I write this introduction, barely eight weeks have elapsed since the inauguration of President Barack Obama, and if there were a honeymoon period, it has most definitely passed. In Pakistan, a weak and divided regime is tottering. To its west, the U.S.-installed regime in Afghanistan is in retreat before the Taliban. In a globalized world, no country has been spared the stresses caused by the financial crisis. And here in the U.S., the severity of the downturn has reignited rancorous partisan debate. The topic of Robert Bates's *When Things Fell Apart*—the focus of our featured symposium—is the breakdown of political order in parts of Africa. But, apropos earlier discussions about area studies and its limits in which Bates was an important participant, the problem of ensuring effective and legitimate governance is hardly the provenance of the "less developed" world.

In the last issue of *Perspectives,* we featured a symposium on Larry Bartels's *Unequal Democracy: The Political Economy of the New Gilded Age,* an account of the political sources of growing inequality in the U.S. This issue features an interesting critical exchange between Shane Hamilton and Joseph E. Lowndes on the long-discussed breakdown of the "New Deal" regime in the 1980s that nicely complements the Bartels discussion. While Hamilton's *Trucking Country: The Road to America's Wal-Mart Economy* treats the political economy of independent trucking as a lens through which to view post–New Deal transformations of class politics, Lowndes's *From the New Deal to the New Right* focuses, in the words of its subtitle, on *Race and the Southern Origins of Modern Conservatism.* While the authors disagree about the relative weight that ought to be accorded to race versus class, they agree on the importance of broad developmental accounts of the rise and fall of U.S. political regimes. In our comparative section, reviews of Dan Zuberi's *Differences that Matter: Social Policy and the Working Poor in the United States and Canada*; Gerard R. Boychuk's *National Health Insurance in the United States and Canada: Race, Territory and the Roots of Difference*; and Paul V. Dutton's *Differential Diagnoses: A Comparative History of Health Care Problems and Solutions in the United States and France* offer useful comparative perspectives on the current policy challenges confronting the American state. And Shari Berman's review of *Social Democracy in the Global Periphery: Origins, Challenges, Prospects* casts these challenges in an even broader light, making clear that the use of the state to offset the perceived inefficiencies and injustices of the market is a pervasive issue of our times.

This issue also features a wide-ranging review essay by Jeffrey Kopstein on the topic of "anti-Americanism." Reviewing important recent books by Peter Katzenstein and Robert Keohane, Andrei Markovits, and Jeffrey Anderson, G. John Ikenberry, and Thomas Risse, Kopstein makes clear that the theme of "American exceptionalism" is both a powerful ideological trope and the source of much current misunderstanding. Following the lead of the books under review, Kopstein considers "anti-Americanism" in terms of political culture, the comparative politics of European and U.S. political regimes, and the geo-strategic rivalries of transatlantic and international politics. His discussion leaves no doubt that "anti-Americanism," whatever its complexities, symbolizes a range of significant challenges to U.S. foreign policy, and limits to U.S. power, anticipated in the coming years. His essay can also be read as a reflection on the limits of our subfield categories. For, as both his review and the books it discusses make clear, controversies about "America" implicate simultaneously issues conventionally treated separately as American politics, comparative politics, international relations, or political theory.

The critical exchange between Jackie Smith and Peter Spiro on globalization and new forms of citizenship also makes clear the limits of our academic boundaries through its discussion of the limits of the political boundaries associated with the nation-state. Both authors recognize the increasing importance of transnational flows of people, goods, bads (arms, diseases, ecological and biological hazards), and ideas. And both focus on the forms of governance, beyond the nation-state, that might be appropriate to regulating such flows (Hans Schattle's review of James Bohman's *Democracy across Borders: From Dêmos to Dêmoi* and Hauke Brunkhort's *Solidarity: From Civic Friendship to a Global Legal Community* also raises these issues). Where they differ regards the extent to which current structures incorporate latent democratizing impulses (Spiro) or are dominated by corporate elites and require more radical forms of contestation (Smith). These critical exchanges are designed to promote constructive dialogue among scholars who approach similar topics in different ways. Both

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exchanges featured in this issue exemplify the advantages of such dialogue, but also the challenges of mutual understanding. In scholarship as in politics, it is common for even the most sincere interlocutors to feel as if they have not been fully understood. And it is quite unusual for serious differences of perspective to simply dissolve in the course of dialogue. But by sharpening differences, and by enacting an ethic of "agonistic respect" (a term coined by the political theorist Bill Connolly), such exchanges add both to the intellectual vitality and the intellectual productivity of our discipline.

This vitality and productivity is exemplified by our featured symposium on Robert Bates's *When Things Fell Apart.* As is well known, Bates has been for decades a major contributor to the study of African politics, the political economy of development, the new institutionalism, and the methodology of comparative research. *When Things Fell Apart* is a powerful extended essay on a theme of undeniable importance—the causes of impoverishment and civil and political disorder in large parts of Africa. In this book about things falling apart, Bates brings *together* his many contributions to the study of African politics and comparative politics more generally. The topic and the author both demand attention. And so, I invited three top scholars of African politics who are also broad comparativists to comment on the book. James Fearon, focusing on methodological issues, raises questions about the logic and the empirics of Bates's account of civil war and state failure. Michael Bratton and Jeffrey Herbst each in a different way raise questions about whether Bates's account of state failure is too one sided. Bratton's comment nicely sums up this point: "To capture prevalent trends in contemporary African politics, it is important to explain cases in which order is breaking down—a task that Bates executes skillfully—but equally important to attend to cases in which, through a sequence of regular elections, citizens are beginning to hold Africa's leaders accountable. To be sure, the forces of disorder are powerful—in many places even dominant—but they are not uncontested, most importantly by Africans themselves."

At stake in this debate are competing views regarding the power of democracy in Africa and of the centrifugal forces that limit this power. Given the extent of poverty, economic inequality, political violence, and indeed genocide in parts of Africa, it is hard to imagine an issue of more pressing moral consequence. But it is not simply in Africa that the problem of "state failure" presents itself. And it is not only "failing states" that confront severe challenges of public authority. The disintegration of public life is a general problem of contemporary politics. The capacity of democracy to respond to the forces of political and economic decay is an open question, in Africa and in general. Political science at its best can keep such questions open even as it furnishes fallible and provisional answers to them.

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