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Notes from the Editors

We introduce this issue with a thought. There has been much made of the need for our discipline to be "policy relevant," and much ridicule has been directed at the *Review* recently that comments how little the *Review* offers that is relevant for decision makers. But what does it mean to be policy relevant? Generally, scholarly journals publish the best in basic research, which hopefully can be used by those in positions of authority to good effect. This often means that there are no catchy titles, nor opinion-editorial pieces that are so often portrayed as the model of policy relevant work. In our view, the role of the *Review* is to expand knowledge on important scholarly questions, not only to publish work that is currently popular or somehow ordained as useful by pundits. There is certainly a place for such work, but not in the pages of the *Review*. On the other hand, we as the editors of the *Review* understand the need to make the *Review* accessible to as broad an audience as possible, and we have made great efforts to do just that.

In this issue of the *Review*, as with previous issues, we present articles that ask important questions, such as the following: What role does a legislature perform in terms of "returns to office" in an authoritarian setting? Are legislatures in authoritarian settings similar or different with regard to the rewards of holding office that are often seen in the West (and particularly the United States)? Do single-member district elections, used in the United States, benefit minority candidates? Do quota for the representation of minorities actually benefit minorities (and reduce stereotypes about minorities) in developing countries? Are acute conflicts in places like Africa resolvable, or are they the product of long-standing historical conflicts that cannot be resolved by commonly considered conflict reduction mechanisms? Were the suppositions of Max Weber, upon whose work much of the common wisdom regarding capitalism and state building is based, actually correct? And, finally, do we measure fundamental concepts like "human rights" performance cross-nationally accurately in the data we use, which have so many implications for policy makers? These and other questions are addressed by the articles that appear in this issue of the Review, and we leave it to our colleagues to decide whether or not they are "relevant."

In This Issue

Our lead article highlights how research that transcends subdisciplinary boundaries in political science can help scholars gain new insights on new issues. In the first article of this issue, Rory Truex considers how members from both democratic and authoritarian regimes benefit from their legislative positions albeit for different reasons. Truex ultimately asks in "**The Returns to Office in a 'Rubber Stamp' Parliament**" whether there are "returns to office" in an authoritarian parliament. Using literature from U.S. politics to frame the argument he asks the question of how do representatives and their affiliates obtain benefits in such constrained environments? Truex investigates these questions using original data on the backgrounds and behaviors of deputies to China's National People's Congress (NPC)—an institution widely dismissed as a meaningless "rubber stamp." The article has important implications for the study of the role of legislatures in authoritarian regimes. Truex concludes with a brief discussion on future research directions in the study of authoritarian parliaments.

Olena Hankivsky in "**Rethinking Care Ethics: On the Promise and Potential of an Intersectional Analysis**" applies intersectionality—the notion that people fall under many intersecting categories, rather than simply the category of gender, for example—to care ethics. The result is a more nuanced understanding of the lives of caregivers, an often-exploited group. Bringing together the rich conversations in intersectionality and in care ethics promises to enrich both approaches, and to increase our understanding of the social construction of diversity, the politics of inclusion/exclusion, the dynamics between power and resulting inequities, and social justice. The article covers an overview of care ethics including critiques, followed by a discussion on how care theory can benefit from the insights of intersectionality.

For some time now the conventional wisdom is that single-member districts facilitate the descriptive representation of minority candidates while at-large elections place minority candidates at a distinct disadvantage. In "**Partisanship, Structure, and Representation: The Puzzle of African American Education Politics**," Kenneth J. Meier and Amanda Rutherford revisit the relationship between electoral structures and minority representation. Specifically they examine the impact of at-large elections on African American representation on school boards, using data for 2001, 2004, and 2008 from the 1800 largest districts in the United States. Their findings will surprise many scholars as their analysis reveals that African Americans are overrepresented on school boards in districts with at-large elections where Democratic voting majorities exist.

In the next article, "**Voting Equilibria Under Proportional Representation**," Seok-ju Cho sets out to improve our understanding of election outcomes under Proportional Representation (PR) by building a model that accounts for strategic voting among the electorate. Since policy outcomes are determined in negotiations by representatives after the election, voters may vote strategically, with an eye to these negotiations and policy outcomes, rather than simply voting for their preferred candidates. Cho finds that PR promotes representation of small parties in general, even when voters are strategic. Predictions of this study can

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be used for the purpose of theoretical comparisons of PR systems and majoritarian systems as the latter systems are extensively studied under the assumption of outcome-oriented strategic actors.

Have human rights practices improved over the past three decades? Christopher J. Fariss's article "**Respect for Human Rights has Improved Over Time: Modeling the Changing Standard of Accountability**" suggests that political indicators do not show stagnating human rights practices but rather reflect a systematic change in how monitoring agencies—like Amnesty International and the U.S. State Department—encounter and interpret information about human rights abuses. In this article, Fariss provides a fresh approach and interpretation of existing empirical evidence and an unexpected outcome. Comparing information derived from an existing dynamic ordinal item response theory model (constant standard model) to a new extension of this model (dynamic standard model), Fariss demonstrates unobserved changes to the standard of accountability, which explains why average levels of repression have appeared to remain constant as existing models of human rights suggest. Considering coded documents over an extended period of time, Fariss's research reveals several valuable contributions to the study of international relations.

"**The Legacy of Historical Conflict: Evidence from Africa**" by Timothy Besley and Mara Reynal-Querol contributes to an emerging body of research that examines the precolonial period in Africa in order to better understand contemporary economic and political outcomes. Employing a variety of analytical techniques examines the impact on historical conflict in Africa during the precolonial period and how that has affected levels of conflict currently, they find that conflict zones on the continent that have persisted over time. Using data that document 91 conflicts between 1400 and 1700, they find that patterns of conflict in postcolonial countries are directly related to historical conflicts within their borders. Thus patterns of current conflict are a direct product of precolonial conflicts, a consequence independent of other correlates of conflict on the continent.

Did having politically autonomous cities contribute to Europe's political and economic development? Certainly there are reasons to believe city autonomy contributed to European economic growth (consistent with the classic argument made by Max Weber) On the other hand, scholars have argued that such autonomy was a hindrance to growth. In "**Was Weber Right? The Role of Urban Autonomy in Europe's Rise**," David Stasavage provides an approach that reconciles the two views regarding the impact of city autonomy. He finds that, although initially autonomous cities progressed over time, the situation reversed itself, where autonomous cities grew less rapidly then princely cities. Further, the article suggests institutional reasons for the disappearance of autonomous cities over time in Europe.

How can states be restrained from excessive, unsustainable borrowing? This is one of several questions R. Daniel Kelemen and Terence Teo consider in their topical study "**Law, Focal Points, and Fiscal Discipline in the United States and European Union**." Kelemen and Teo note that many studies of balanced budget rules in U.S. states suggest that strict rules play a role in restraining sovereign debt and lowering sovereign borrowing costs. However, they also note that these rules are seldom enforced. Existing literature points to legal deterrence logic as an explanation for the latter. Kelemen and Teo argue that instead of the threat of judicial enforcement, the more decentralized punishment by bond markets provides a more compelling explanation for adherence to balanced budget rules.

In **The** "**Wisdom of the State**," Ryan Patrick Hanley argues that Adam Smith's extensive engagement with China and neighboring Tartary sheds new light on his general theory of economic development and decline. Smith's detailed treatment of China and Tartary, according to Hanley, highlights the key role that the state has to play in fostering healthy economic development and forestalling decline.

Ben Ansell, in "**The Political Economy of Ownership: Housing Markets and the Welfare State**," develops a novel theoretical argument linking housing prices with social policy preferences and policy outcomes. Ansell addresses how—over the last decade—the global surge and collapse of house prices have affected citizens' welfare, not to mention their demands from government. Ansell identifies several gaps in previous research pertaining to social policy, which he sets out to fill by drawing from existing literature and testing propositions using microdata on social preferences from panel surveys in the United States, the United Kingdom, and a cross-national survey of 29 countries, and a macrodate of national social spending for 18 countries between 1975 and 2001.

Simon Chauchard's findings contribute to several ongoing debates in the social sciences, and in particular, "**Can Descriptive Representation Change Beliefs about a Stigmatized Group?**" This article informs of discussions on how to reduce stereotypes, prejudice, and discrimination by suggesting that a group's access to political representation positively affect the nature of intergroup relations. However, unlike scholars who suggest that descriptive representation can reduce stereotypes about disadvantaged groups, Chauchard questions whether or not this is true. Using the case of recent efforts to enhance descriptive representation of historically disadvantaged castes in rural Rajasthan, India, he finds that despite several inclusive policies, members of scheduled castes continue to experience discrimination in their interactions with other groups.

Existing research shows social policies play a significant part in regime survival; however, Xiaobo Lu's article "**Social Policy and Regime Legitimacy: The Effects of Education Reform in China**" depicts multifaceted effects of social policies on political attitudes. Lu found that recent education policy in China has increased Chinese citizens' preference for government responsibility in financing compulsory education specifically among rural residents—a rising demand that he found to be driven by policy awareness, not policy

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benefits. Lu evaluates the impact of the policy on regime support and shows that it only bolsters citizens' trust in the central government, not their trust in local governments.

Andrej Kokkonen and Anders Sundell, in "**Delivering Stability—Primogeniture and Autocratic Survival in European Monarchies 1000–1800**," consider the difficulty in arranging a succession of leadership in autocracies which is of fundamental importance to understanding both leader survival and state-building efforts in autocracies. They argue that a succession based on primogeniture addresses these issues by providing the regime with a successor who can afford to wait to inherit the throne peacefully. Arguing that this autocratic survival in the modern world can be augmented by primogeniture, they test their hypothesis historically on a dataset covering 961 monarchs ruling 42 European states between 1000 and 1800. The results show that fewer monarchs were deposed in states practicing primogeniture than in states practicing alternative succession orders. Primogeniture also contributed to building strong states.

In our final piece, "**Elite Parties and Poor Voters: Theory and Evidence from India**," Tariq Thachil addresses the "poor voter paradox," a phenomenon that stretches from Kansas to India. Thachil raises several interesting questions, for example, why do disadvantaged voters routinely cast their ballots in favor of parties that represent the policy interests of wealthier classes? Thus far, as he points out, the "poor voter paradox" has been exclusively studied within wealthy democracies—Thachil extends the scope of research by turning to the country that has the world's largest poor electorate: India. He outlines a novel strategy adopted by elite parties in Indian based on an electoral division of labor enabling elite parties to recruit the poor while retaining the rich. Essentially, recruitment is outsourced to nonparty affiliates who provide basic services to appeal to poor communities. Such outsourcing permits the party to maintain programmatic linkages to its elite core. He test this explanation with both qualitative and quantitative evidence, including a survey of over 9000 voters, and finds support for this truly novel explanation for the "poor voter paradox."

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[1] See http://www.aapor.org/standards.asp

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[3] *Behavior Genetics* 42 (2012): 1–2, DOI 10.1007/s10519–011-9504-zvi

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