Note from the Editors

Wendy Pearlman and Ana Arjona

Struggles For and Over Representation

Some of the most essential questions in politics center on how those who govern represent the governed. Who does or should the state represent? What structures and conditions shape representation and its variation over time and space? The lead section in this issue takes on questions of representation not simply as a characteristic of political systems but also as a battleground of contestation. Six articles explore how institutions, laws, and societal processes—as well as struggles over and through those dimensions of the political world—enable or impede representation. As a collection, they offer insights from above, from below, over time, and with the nuanced insight of multiple methodologies.

The first three articles examine state-level factors. In "Federalism and Democratic Backsliding in Comparative Perspective," Robert R. Kaufman, R. Daniel Kelemen, and Burcu Kolcak take on the long-standing debate about representative political systems that centers on competing hypotheses about the efficacy of federalism for safeguarding democracy. Shifting from sweeping claims to more nuanced relationships, the authors argue that whether or not federal systems can prevent democratic backsliding is contingent on the strength and political control of state institutions. They test their argument with a multimethod empirical approach. Quantitative analysis of all democracies from 1974 to 2021 reveals no significant relationship between federalism and the occurrence, pace, or severity of democratic backsliding. As the universe of cases is small and federalism manifests in variable ways, however, the authors also turn to qualitative comparison of four cases. Their analysis shows how Brazil and the United States manifested the institutional resources and partisan independence to thwart autocratic threats from above, while Venezuela and India's more institutionally weak and politically vulnerable states rendered them less able to do so. In an era of increasing democratic backsliding, these findings encourage both scholars and constitutional designers to continue examining the specific conditions under which federalism does or does not serve to protect representative systems.

This insight into the functioning of different representative systems raises questions about the processes that give rise to any country's institutional arrangements. The next article, "Sweden's Peculiar Adoption of Proportional Representation: The Overlooked Effects of Time and History," investigates struggles for representation through comparative historical analysis of the origins of electoral systems. Marcus Kreuzer and Runa Neely note that literature on the origins of proportional representation (PR) has converged around the "left-threat thesis," which attributes its emergence to late nineteenth-century industrialization, when Conservatives and Liberals sought to contain the perceived threat of propertyless workers by enfranchising them in return for minority protections. The authors note that the Swedish case confirms most empirical implications of this thesis, but also highlights the role of four previously untheorized temporal mechanisms: the sequencing of causal factors; the timing of Sweden's PR adoption relative to other European countries; historical change over a long institutional adoption period; and the duration of PR's adoption. Using nested analysis together with causal graphs, they show how these unexplained factors need not be treated as evidence disconfirming existing theory but instead can be treated as insights with which to update that theory. This research makes both a theoretical contribution to scholarship on the origins of representative institutions and a methodological contribution to approaches for updating theories in response to newly discovered empirical anomalies. It encourages further small N analysis in both domains.

Struggles for representation over and through state apparatuses call for research not only on the institutions that safeguard representation but also on those that limit or deny it. In "Estimating Disenfranchisement in U.S. Elections, 1870–1970," Thomas R. Gray and Jeffrey A. Jenkins turn to the post-Civil War United States to investigate specific measures to block voting access, such as the poll tax, literacy tests, and the Australian ballot, and then undertake to determine how much they reduced voter turnout across all 50 states. Analyzing state-level voting data from presidential and gubernatorial elections in conjunction with a new dataset on the timing of suffrage restrictions, the authors contend that the poll tax, used exclusively in the South, was the primary technique by which disenfranchisement occurred. Its implementation,

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along with the enactment of ex-felon disenfranchisement laws, is associated with large declines in voter turnout and with Republican Party support, given that Republicans led efforts to expand suffrage rights to African American men during Reconstruction. Literacy tests and the Australian ballot likely provided secondary tools to prevent African Americans from voting in the South. With a consideration of county-level voting data and demographic variables like the Black percentage of the population, the authors provide new evidence that local racial politics explain these changes. This article offers novel empirical understanding of historical patterns with implications for pressing contemporary debates on representation in the United States, such as those related to voting rights and ex-felon disenfranchisement laws.

Beyond state laws and institutions, struggles for representation are also shaped by dynamics at the social level. One issue is the distribution of preferences across society in general, and polarization of society, in particular. Christian F. Rostbøll notes that existing scholarship on polarization and democracy concurs that polarization has a negative impact on democracy, but often fails to consider how varied types of polarization impact democracy in varied ways. In "Polarization and the Democratic System: Kinds, Reasons, and Sites," the author crafts a framework that bridges democratic theory and empirical studies to show how different arenas of democracy, such as civil society, electoral campaigns, and legislative assemblies, follow different logics that can allow them to tolerate or even benefit from polarization. On this basis, he identifies five criteria for assessing democratic quality and builds five arguments: the problem of polarization is more a question of kind than of degree; affective polarization is not necessarily detrimental for democracy; the significance of group polarization for democracy relates more to the process of opinion formation than the content of opinions themselves; and whether polarization helps or hurts democracy depends on the sites of the democratic system in which it takes place. This research encourages scholars to challenge the simplistic view that polarization is inherently detrimental to democracy and instead unravel its diverse effects across multiple types, degrees, and sites of polarization.

A societal lens on struggles for representation also raises the question of mobilization from below. "Deepening or Endangering Democracy: Demonstrations and Institutions under Representative Government" spotlights the debate about whether protest potentially strengthens democracy or instead undermines free institutions and representative systems. Robert M. Fishman builds a comprehensive analytical framework to navigate the possible tension between demonstrations' pursuit of democratic depth and their potential to undermine efforts to guarantee democracy's authenticity and consolidation. Pulling on examples from the 1960s United States to 1970s Spain and Portugal, the January 6 riots, and Mussolini's 1922 March on Rome, the author contests the common emphasis on the definitive significance of the location of demonstrations and intentions of political actors. Rather, he argues that protest should be welcomed as a corrective to representative institutions as long as protest is not a method for choosing officeholders or a means of violently assaulting or physically intimidating them. This reflection essay pushes forward thinking about the principles that distinguish admissible and unacceptable forms of popular pressure within democracies and encourages ongoing research into the conditions under which mobilization can complement the work of representative institutions.

While comparative research can help establish general patterns in the relationship between mobilization and representation, in-depth case studies delve further into complexity, including change over time. In "The Process of Revolutionary Protest: Development and Democracy in the Tunisian Revolution," Christopher Barrie critiques existing scholarship that treats democratic revolutionary protest as a discrete, unitary, monolithic outcome. Instead, he uses a multimethod research design to demonstrate how revolutionary aspirations evolve endogenously as new participants join a movement and new coalitions form. Event history analysis from the 29 days of the Tunisian Revolution shows that the determinants of the occurrence of protest depended on the stage of the uprising. Complementing these patterns, Arab Barometer survey data reveal that Tunisians' commitments to democracy were not strongly correlated with protest participation in the uprising's early stages but became so by the end. Finally, original interviews point to the role of brokerage in uniting different coalitions under common demands as contentious mobilization unfolded. This research yields a novel understanding of revolutionary protest as processual change, which has implications for how we conceptualize democratic contention from below, how we approach it methodologically, and the mechanisms that we identify to explain it.

Labor and Collective Action

While many contributions to *Perspectives* examine collective action, the next special section turns a spotlight on the significance of collective action by and for a specific sector: labor. Workers' mobilization has precipitated consequential social and economic change across history, with major effects in reducing inequality and improving workplace conditions. Given unions' participation in larger political campaigns, organized labor has also had an impact beyond the workplace, be it in electoral contests or struggles for regime change. Applying varied methods, the two articles in the special section encourage political scientists to include labor as a focal point for the study of collective action and beyond.

Alexander Hertel-Fernandez demonstrates the effects of work stoppages and outlines a new research agenda in "When Do Mass Labor Strikes Reshape the Public? New Findings and a Research Agenda for Political Science."

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Investigating whether exposure to a strike changes attitudes and behavior towards labor unions, the author considers the 2019 Stop & Shop grocery store workers strike in southern New England. Fielding an original survey about a month after the strike, he asks respondents a variety of labor-related items, including about their support for the strike, actions that they took on behalf of the striking workers, and their interest in labor organizing. Employing an instrumental variables approach and leveraging respondents' distance from Stop & Shop stores as a causal identification strategy, the author reports that respondents exposed to the strike were more supportive of the striking workers and more likely to act on their behalf. However, respondents exposed to the strike were not more supportive of the labor movement in general or more likely to take labor action at their own jobs. From the mixed results, this reflection essay advocates for a new research agenda on responses to strikes, including diverse lines of inquiry into how political leaders and workers' demographic characteristics influence strike support, why strikes sometimes backfire in public opinion, and the consequences of strikes for future labor union organizing.

The study of labor and collective action can also yield explanatory leverage for understanding processes beyond workers' issues. Seeking to explain how and why interest groups without preexisting ties choose to cooperate, "Power in a Union: How Unexpected Group Partnerships Form" turns to labor-gay coalitions to examine the origins of unlikely alliances of the kind that undergird many lobbying efforts and political parties. Using a deviant case selection strategy, structured comparison, and process tracing, Boris Heersink and Matthew J. Lacombe compare two cases from the 1970s and 1980s: the Coors boycott in San Francisco and the Lesbians and Gays Support the Miners campaign in the United Kingdom. In both cases, groups had no prior relationship, were not closely aligned with the same party, and were not perceived to be compatible—yet formed what the authors theorize as "unexpected group partnerships." The authors argue that both sets of groups faced shared threats and mutual vulnerabilities that produced a political opportunity structure favorable for collaboration; an entrepreneurial leadership then took advantage of that opening to forge durable bonds. Though the authors do not make strong claims about generalizability, they shed light on the roots of an alliance that has become important for center-left parties in both countries and encourage future investigation of the construction of partisan coalitions.

State and Non-State Political Violence

Violence perpetrated by both state and non-state actors continues to shape political behavior, social outcomes, and institutional dynamics across the globe. The five articles in this section advance our understanding of how different forms of violence—from terrorism to police brutality, and from racial violence to military atrocities—emerge, evolve, and impact societies. Examining the strategic calculations of violent actors, the historical roots of support for violence, the consequences of attacks for political behavior, and the organizational dynamics that enable violent acts, these articles offer fresh theoretical insights while tackling pressing empirical puzzles. Through diverse methodological approaches and evidence from various contexts, they deepen our understanding of why political violence occurs and how it transforms political life.

In "Extremism and Terrorism: Rebel Goals and Tactics in Civil Wars," Renanah Miles Joyce and Virginia Page Fortna examine how rebel groups' goals influence their decisions to adopt terrorism as a strategy. The authors explore whether groups with extremist aims are more likely to use terrorism, challenging the common assumption that extremist groups are inherently more prone to such tactics. They note that this assumption is often tautological; armed groups are labeled extremist precisely because of the tactics they use. To break this circular reasoning, Joyce and Fortna propose a new conceptualization of extremism based on the degree to which a group's goals deviate from the status quo. Analyzing novel data on rebel group aims in civil wars from 1970 to 2013, as well as existing data on terrorism, they find that only extremist goals tied to changing a state's ideology or altering the power balance between identity groups increase the likelihood of using terrorism. In contrast, secessionist groups are no more likely to rely on terrorism than groups pursuing less extreme goals, such as increased autonomy. These findings provide fresh insights into terrorism, extremist ideologies, and the attributes of groups that are likely to rely on terrorist tactics.

Tim Vlandas and Daphne Halikiopoulou move from the drivers of terrorism to its political consequences. In "Jihadist Terrorist Attacks and Far-Right Party Preferences: An 'Unexpected Event During Survey Design' in Four European Countries," they analyze how Jihadist attacks affect political behavior. Using survey data from the European Social Survey collected in the Netherlands, Sweden, Germany, and France, the authors leverage the timing of the attacks as "random treatments" to assess changes in political attitudes. Their findings reveal no significant change in individuals' self-reported proximity to far-right parties immediately following the attacks. However, the attacks did lead to an increase in anti-immigration sentiments and broader negative attitudes toward immigrants and refugees, alongside increased trust in institutions. The study also highlights the heterogeneous effects of the attacks: individuals typically associated with far-right party support were deterred from increasing their support for these parties, while those not previously aligned with the far right showed a significant rise in support for far-right parties after the attacks. These findings underscore the complex and sometimes contradictory ways in which terrorism influences voter behavior and

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highlight the importance of reporting null results to advance research on the behavioral effects of political violence.

Further exploring the intersection of violence and political behavior, "Anti-Black Political Violence and the Historical Legacy of the Great Replacement Conspiracy" by Andrew Ifedapo Thompson, Maxwell Beveridge, Stefan McCabe, Molly Ahern, Fryda Cortes, Noah Axford, and Jacqueline Martinez Franks investigates the enduring support for anti-Black political violence in the United States. The authors trace this violence to long-standing efforts to uphold white supremacist rule and argue that contemporary support for such violence is fueled by mass misconceptions about Black demographic growth and the belief that Black Americans are making political and economic gains at the expense of whites. This "Black replacement" misperception, they argue, drives significant levels of anti-Black violent attitudes among whites. Using a series of priming experiments, the authors find evidence supporting their hypotheses. The study demonstrates that anti-Black political violence is highly racialized and is rooted in widespread misconceptions, which can be exacerbated by political elites and the news media. These findings raise serious concerns about the challenges multiracial democracies face in combating deep-rooted racial biases and also highlight the potential influence of demographic change on political violence.

The last two papers in this section turn our attention to violence perpetrated by state actors. In "Deviant Cohesion and Unauthorized Atrocities: Evidence from the American War in Vietnam," Marek Brzezinski explores why soldiers engage in unauthorized atrocities despite the risks and costs. Brzezinski attributes this behavior to "deviant cohesion"—conceptualized as the presence of strong social ties coupled with weak discipline. He argues that atrocities often stem from soldiers' desire for revenge over the loss of comrades and that this emotional response is heightened in units with strong social bonds. In units where discipline is weak, the desire for revenge is more likely to result in unauthorized atrocities as informal norms can diverge from official policies. Analyzing archival documents and ex-combatant surveys, Brzezinski finds that postmortem mutilation of enemy combatants was frequent in American units during the Vietnam War, despite being explicitly prohibited. Consistent with the theory, the evidence suggests that such atrocities were more prevalent in units marked by strong peer bonds and weak enforcement of organizational rules. By showing the potential risks of fostering strong social bonds in military units and the challenges of enforcing discipline, this research contributes to our understanding of state violence, war crimes, and the internal dynamics of military units.

Finally, in "Voting with Their Guns: An Integrated Framework of How Police Politically Administer Violence," Hernán Flom challenges the prevailing view that police always follow the directives of political incumbents. Flom argues that police often act according to their own interests and preferences, which may diverge from the wishes of politicians. He introduces a typology that captures variation in politicians' decisions to incite or restrain police violence, as well as the police's decision to comply or defy these orders. The typology is illustrated with quantitative and qualitative data on national and subnational governments in formally democratic countries, alongside interviews with police officers and politicians in Argentina and Brazil. Flom's work advances our understanding of police violence and its political implications, underscoring the importance of considering the agency of police forces in shaping political and social outcomes.

Other Articles

Regina Bateson extracts insights from ethnographic fieldwork in "Finding Meaning in Politics: When Victims Become Activists." Addressing the question of why victims of traffic violence become politically active, she argues that meaning-making can be a key motivation. Despite the high emotional and personal costs of activism, which often include reliving trauma and facing public criticism, grieving family members frequently increase their involvement in the policymaking process. Drawing from participant observation with the traffic safety group Families for Safe Streets in New York City and Albany, New York, as well as in-depth interviews with the organization's founding members, Bateson identifies three key factors that motivate victims to become activists. First, victims reframe their personal tragedies as policy problems rather than random misfortunes. Second, they seek to help others by advocating for legal reforms that could prevent future violence. Third, they often view their activism as a way to honor their deceased relatives. Contributing to the literature on social movements, violence, and urban politics, this article offers a new explanation for why victims engage in collective action at the local level after experiencing trauma.

In "Republican Policing: From Consent to Contestation," William Smith challenges the traditional model of policing by consent—a doctrine suggesting that the legitimacy of police power depends on public approval of their actions and behaviors as well as their ability to secure and maintain public respect. Smith proposes instead a republican conception of policing, arguing that policing by consent faces significant normative challenges and suggests an alternative approach rooted in republican and democratic theory. Drawing on practices such as community policing, "copwatching," and citizens' deliberative forums, Smith advocates for a policing model based on two key principles: contestation and deliberative regulation. In this contestatory regime, the legitimacy of policing is not derived from the consent of the policed but from the availability of mechanisms that allow citizens to challenge police actions.

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This framework shifts the debate about policing away from passive consent and toward active civic participation. Smith's article contributes not only to contemporary political theory, but also to republicanism by providing a framework for understanding how policing can promote freedom as nondomination—that is, the protection against interference that disregards a person's interests or opinions. It also contributes to ongoing policy debates about police reform by advocating for changes that would strengthen legal oversight of police, empower civil society organizations, and improve the effectiveness of community forums for contestation.

Quinn M. Albaugh, Allison Harell, Peter John Loewen, Daniel Rubenson, and Laura B. Stephenson make a critical intervention into the literature on gender and political behavior in "From Gender Gap to Gender Gaps: Bringing Nonbinary People into Political Behavior Research." The authors ask how individuals who identify as nonbinary differ from men and women in terms of party identification and voting behavior. Using data from the 2021 Canadian Election Study, in which the subsample of nonbinary respondents was large enough to analyze their political behavior, the authors reveal that there are not only gender gaps between men and women but also multiple gender gaps between nonbinary people and both men and women in Canadian politics. Even after restricting the sample to LGBTQ respondents and controlling for demographic characteristics and issue attitudes, nonbinary individuals were more likely than men and women to identify with and vote for the social democratic New Democratic Party over either the center-left Liberal Party or the center-right Conservative Party. In addition to its empirical and theoretical contributions, this article challenges scholars of gender and political behavior to include nonbinary identity in surveys and to incorporate deeper considerations of nonbinary identities into their research designs.

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