

Introduction and Comments

By Jennifer L. Hochschild

More or less by accident, some issues of *Perspectives on Politics* have revolved around a dominant theme. Articles in an early issue focused on conflict, from civil war to labor union strikes; a more recent set considered connections between politics and change over time, from how individuals and polities learn to why a legislature passes a law in the afternoon that it had rejected in the morning. This issue of *Perspectives* turns out to address mainly issues of methodology in political science—how we do our work, why we should do it differently, and how methodological choices entwine with substantive interests and political commitments.

“The Rehnquist Court and the Political Dynamics of Federalism,” by Mitchell Pickerill and Cornell Clayton, returns to a hardy perennial of American politics—to what degree does “th’ supreme coort follow th’ iliction returns,” in Finley Peter Dunne’s matchless phrase? The authors focus on federalism, with the ironic starting point of a conservative Court being highly activist in withdrawing power from the federal government on behalf of the states. They compare the *politics* of federalism—party platforms of presidential candidates, federal policy responsiveness to state and local governments, and the effectiveness of lobbying organizations—with the *law* of federalism, in the shape of recent Supreme Court decisions. They conclude that “the Court has [indeed] followed general political trends” in this arena, but that in doing so it has generated an interesting and important controversy about the role of the judiciary in American politics. Democrats support court-ordered federalism in order to promote strong connections between federal and more local elective branches; Republicans support court-ordered federalism in order to provide a judicial counterweight to elective branches at any level of government. Legal scholars focus mostly on the latter issue, and political scientists on the former, so disciplinary and methodological disagreements get wrapped up in complicated ways with substantive and procedural political disputes. Pickerill and Clayton, however, sort it all out.

In “Beyond Monologue,” Fred Dallmayr chastises his fellow political philosophers for focusing too much on well-rehearsed Western ideas and modes of argument and too little on the rich array of non-Western philosophical traditions. As a result, political philosophers, and by extension all political scientists, lack the urgency and tools needed to respond to a world transformed by globalization in general and September 11 in particular. However, the work of prominent political philosophers

influenced by Indian, Arab, Korean, or other traditions, which Dallmayr describes, can shake us out of our canonical complacency. Comparative political theorizing promotes genuine dialogue across national borders rather than imperialistic monologues; it can thus contribute to constructive political engagement while revivifying our stale philosophies.

Nicholas Sambanis, in “Using Case Studies to Expand Economic Models of Civil War,” finds plenty of methodological and substantive disputes, even within the empirical side of political science. He begins with well-known models of the causes of civil war that focus primarily on economic motivations and cost-benefit frameworks for analysis. He finds these models wanting; they pay insufficient attention to the range of violent acts from assassination to all-out civil war, they fail to include noneconomic motivations such as rage and ethnic or tribal loyalty, and they are vague on the processes that lead a nation into civil war. Sambanis argues that systematic case studies selected to address analytic questions can overcome the weaknesses of more aggregated and economically oriented models. He uses such case studies to illuminate fascinating features of civil wars around the world. Sambanis also holds out the promise that eventually, if we understand the causes of civil war more fully, political scientists can offer combatants means for reducing or even averting wide-scale violence.

Jasjeet Sekhon, like Nicholas Sambanis, uses classic works of political science as the starting point for his own argument. In “Quality Meets Quantity,” Sekhon asks nothing less than how to determine cause and effect. John Stuart Mill famously proposed five methods for comparing similar circumstances to one another, different circumstances to one another, and various other combinations in order to answer that question. But as Mill himself pointed out, his methods only work when the presumed causal relationship is unique and deterministic—thus excluding almost all important political phenomena. Using the writings of Theda Skocpol and Barbara Geddes, Sekhon shows how probabilistic models must supplement or even supplant Millian methods. We need to identify the right counterfactuals to determine what leads to revolutions or electoral turnover, and we need to distinguish among factors that are necessary to a given outcome, sufficient, contributory, or contributory under particular conditions. Case studies, statistical analysis, formal models, and experiments all have a place in this enterprise; the essential step is to specify *how* and *when* something is causing something else.

Our symposium in this issue carves the methodological themes in even bolder relief. Henry Brady, who developed the symposium, opens with an introduction that is a contribution in its own right. He argues that political science should be conceived of as more like biology than like physics, and that these two proponents of qualitative and quantitative methods, respectively, do not disagree on the fundamentals of good research. I see deeper disagreements between the two articles than Brady does on the nature and virtues of science; we leave it to our readers to adjudicate.

In “Identities, Interests, and the Tasks of Political Science in the 21st Century,” Rogers Smith argues for almost the opposite strategy for achieving that ambition. Smith asserts that the central political questions revolve around political identities—how they are made and remade; what identities people have thrust upon them, choose to take on, or abhor; and how identities shape political choices and actions. To understand political allegiance or enmity, one must examine the particular historical and institutional context within which groups live, and one must seek “empathetic interpretive understandings of human consciousnesses and values.” Formal models, aggregate data analysis, and case studies all can play a role in this enterprise, but the last approach is much more likely than the former two to provide the kind of knowledge we need. In addition, Smith argues (like Sambanis) that properly deployed case studies can move beyond “theorizing by proverb,” to use Granato and Scioli’s phrase, to permit general analytic propositions about cause and effect, probability and conditionality. Such propositions, once appropriately grounded in historical particularities and human consciousness, will enable us to influence the actual practice of politics.

Jim Granato and Frank Scioli, in “Puzzles, Proverbs, and Omega Matrices,” hold the same ambition as Rogers Smith: a cumulative science of politics that can have important and salutary effects on public policy. Their strategy, however, differs. They assert that we will make progress in the *science* of politics only by abandoning the self-indulgences of atheoretical number-crunching or theorizing by proverb. Instead, we need to combine the virtues of formal modeling, which articulates precise assumptions and testable hypotheses, with the virtues of case studies that can explicate mechanisms and applied statistical models that can rule out alternative explanations. Testing models with data, in short, will enable a cumulative science. Granato and Scioli provide examples of good political science and bad, and argue that the only way our discipline can ever affect public policy is by producing clear results which policy-makers can trust—“research findings that are reliable and valid and provide identifiable predictions.” We fall embarrassingly short of that standard at present, but the tools are at hand to make real progress.

This issue has two “Perspectives” essays, both motivated by the need for political scientists to contribute their expertise to resolving the shock waves still emanating from 9/11. “The Task of Liberal Theory after September 11,” by J. Judd Owen, addresses much the same question as Dallmayr’s article—how philosophers should respond to this unforeseen and horrific transformation of the world view of the United States. West-

ern political philosophers, he argues, need to directly engage with illiberal revealed theology and the societies built upon it. Contemporary liberal theory is ill-equipped to do this; over the past century its enemies have been communism and fascism, not fundamentalist religion which claims hegemony over a complete society. Thus we must simultaneously relearn the lessons of an earlier era in which philosophers such as John Locke confronted the illiberal revealed theologies of their day, and learn much more about the philosophical premises of radical Islam. Only then can we think appropriately about the relationship between divine and civil law, revelation and reason, “truth” and toleration. Like Dallmayr, Owen offers no answers, but both lay out a path for us to pursue them.

Adam Meirowitz and Joshua Tucker, in “Learning from Terrorism Markets,” argue that one proposed path for understanding terrorism was abandoned too quickly. They examine the infamous “market for terrorism futures” that the U.S. Department of Defense dropped like a hot potato once it became public. Meirowitz and Tucker show how the media (and politicians) attacked rather than analyzed, and then go on to fill in the analytic gap themselves. As they see it, a market structured properly along several crucial dimensions—which this market mostly was not—could yield valuable information about future terrorist activity, at least as good as any feasible alternative. They do not make this claim, but perhaps one could infer from their article that the refusal of political leaders in the United States to “think the unthinkable” is putting other citizens into greater danger than necessary.

It is a relief to turn to our final article before the book reviews—Philip Brick’s “The Greening of Political Science.” This is a syllabi review essay, one of our new genre in which we ask scholars to reflect on how courses are taught in order to analyze how a field is developing. Brick is clearly an enthusiast for what he hopes is the new subfield of environmental politics, but hardly an uncritical one. He asks us to contemplate what counts as a subfield, how learning for the sake of understanding relates to learning for the sake of promoting change, how science shapes politics and vice versa—as well as how to make sense of the blooming, buzzing confusion that marks this young and innovative offshoot of conventional political science courses.

This issue of *Perspectives* has the usual complement of book reviews, which we expect will be read with the usual care and attention. Both the books reviewed and the attention of the reviewers—along with the articles I have just briefly outlined—show that our discipline is thriving in its many parts. Perhaps it is not impossibly naive to hope that the methods wars are turning into the methods jigsaw puzzle, as various scholars pick and choose the pieces they need to put together the picture of politics that is most compelling to them.

The next issue of *Perspectives* is now facing scrutiny from the editorial red pen. It will contain a symposium on the role political science plays in making sense of the infamous 2000 presidential election in the United States; an article on ethnic and gendered quotas or reservations in national legislatures; an article linking Foucault with Thomas Shelling; and others.