

Review Editor's Introduction

By Jeffrey C. Isaac

The political science discipline is so very broad and diverse. The Program of the APSA meetings is one sign of this. The range of books reviewed in any given issue of *Perspectives* is another. In general we run reviews as we receive them. There is no long-range thematic plan beyond the review essays. And yet it is striking how certain patterns emerge in each issue. Perhaps the patterns I observe when I write these editorial introductions are subconsciously imposed in the editorial process. Perhaps they are simply artifacts of the way I retrospectively read the reviews. Obviously each reader can discern their own patterns, and we hope that they will. My own discernments are intended only as a guide and a prompt. They are motivated by the fact that, for perhaps good reasons including efficiency, most of us tend to read only the reviews in "our" subfields. One of my goals is to draw connections that can move people to look beyond the familiar (more on this below).

The books reviewed in this issue have some broad thematic affinities. One theme that characterizes a number of books located in the Comparative, American, and Theory sections is the dynamics of constitutional democracy and the justifications for this form of regime. This plays out in a number of interesting books that deal with institutional questions, such as Keith E. Whittington's *Political Foundations of Judicial Supremacy: The Presidency, the Supreme Court, and Constitutional Leadership in U.S. History* ("American") or James E. Fleming's *Securing Constitutional Democracy: The Case of Autonomy* ("Theory").

Another related theme is the challenges posed to democratic inclusion and legitimate governance by the politics of multiculturalism and difference. The Comparative section includes a double review of *Why the French Don't Like Headscarves* by John Bowen and *Integrating Islam* by Jonathan Laurence and Justin Vaisse, focusing on the challenges of Muslim integration in France. It also includes a review of *After the Fall of the Wall*, edited by Martin Diewald, Anne Goedicke, and Karl Ulrich Mayer, which investigates the ways in which the dramatic social transformations brought about by the reunification of Germany impacted different generations of East Germans. Both books deal with dimensions of identity politics and integration into Western Europe. Similar issues of inclusion are raised by a number

of books in the American Politics section, most notably Kevin M. Kruse's *White Flight: Atlanta and the Making of Modern Conservatism* and Carolyn Wong's *Lobbying for Inclusion: Rights Politics and the Making of Immigration Policy*. The International Relations section also features reviews of a number of books that deal with issues of human rights, security, and global governance, such as Daniel H. Deudney's *Bounding Power: Republican Security Theory from the Polis to the Global Village* and Daniel W. Drezner's *All Politics is Global: Explaining International Regulatory Regimes*.

Our featured review essay by Stephen Hanson, "Rationality, Structure, and Agency in Post-Soviet Russian Democracy," discusses six recent books that all deal in different, and complementary, ways with the constraints and limits upon democratization in contemporary Russia. Hanson's essay is focused on the political transformations currently under way in Russia (Presidentialism; regionalism; electoral system design; party development; ethnic mobilization). But it also considers the extent to which Russia can be viewed as a "laboratory" for broader dilemmas and challenges confronting democratization.

Hanson's piece also highlights the range of methodological perspectives deployed in the books under review, and the complementarity of these perspectives. In this regard there is a striking affinity between Hanson's "Comparative" essay and Keith Topper's "Political Theory" review of three books on the evolution of the human sciences and the challenges and possibilities presented by the recently heightened appreciation of methodological pluralism in the profession.

This broad theme brings me to my final comment. While my introductions have centered on affinities between reviewed books, I would like to close, perhaps surprisingly, by commenting on a *non*-review, and in doing so by raising a broader issue about specialization in political science. When I inherited the Editor position back in 2005, one of the books caught in the transition was Corey Robin's *Fear: The History of a Political Idea*, published by Oxford University Press in 2004. I happened to be familiar with this book, because I had read and learned much from it, because I had read numerous featured reviews of it, and because it was the 2005 winner of the Best First Book Award of APSA's Foundations of Political Theory section.

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I was surprised it wasn't slated for review and, since it satisfied all relevant criteria, I was resolved to commission a review, in the same way that I commission reviews for almost every first book. My assistants and I solicited over ten published political scientists (our predecessors at UNC had also sought reviewers). Most, but not all, were "political theorists," since that is the conventional home of the book, which deals with political theory and contemporary American and global politics. Well, because we have been unable to secure a reviewer, this particular first book will not be reviewed in *Perspectives*. We could keep trying. But the book is now three years old, and widely discussed and acclaimed. And so it seems better to use this experience for a broader purpose.

Why has it proven impossible to secure a reviewer for the book? We all know it is unwise to draw conclusions from a single case. There are many possible reasons. And I do not propose to pursue a scientific study. But as an editor I can offer a practical intuition: the book did not find a reviewer because it is a book that, in point of fact, does not *have* a clear subdisciplinary "home." It is, in all candor, rather idiosyncratic, ranging from Hobbes to contemporary theory to Stalinism to workplace relations in the U.S. The book's uniqueness and originality, I think, accounts for its interest. APSA's Foundations of Political Theory section deserves credit for having recognized such a book. But, truth be told, most of us academic political scientists would not be inclined to regard the book as "rigorous" from the vantage point of our scholarly specialties. There are some methodological issues driving this tendency. But I am more interested in a more mundane

question of taste. In short, most of us regard professional book reviewing as a "service" activity that also offers opportunities to get free books in our area of specialty, books that we will have to read anyway in order to retain our claim to expertise. This makes sense. Expertise matters. Books are expensive. And it takes *time* to read a book and write something significant and perhaps even refreshing about it. We have all had the experience of being asked to go beyond our comfort zone and, regardless of the temptation, we have all had the experience of politely declining. We live busy lives. It's hard.

There is a "rationality" to this common approach to professional reviewing. But I am reminded of C. Wright Mills's phrase in his 1959 *The Sociological Imagination*: "rationality without reason." I believe that *Perspectives on Politics* represents a commitment, at the highest levels of the profession, to broader discussions and expanded comfort zones, not in place of expertise but as a supplement and a complement to it. This is a challenge. It is a challenge that our profession has handled extremely well. I am heartened by the extraordinary willingness of so many reviewers to do the unexpected and to push the envelope, even if a bit. Doing this editing work is exciting. And for every *Fear* that falls through the Review's cracks—indeed, through these comments I have ensured that it has not so fallen!—there have been many "success stories." I note this "failure" only to ask each reader to think twice before turning aside something outside their comfort zone, and to consider the possibility that a new and slightly different conversation might take some extra time, but it also might be both interesting and fun.