

# Looking Backward, Looking Forward

Michael Bernhard  and Daniel O'Neill

This issue marks the last of our six years as the editorial team of *Perspectives on Politics*. It has been both a richly rewarding and exhausting journey, as well as a labor of love. As with all journeys, some of what we encountered along the way was foreseeable, but much of it was not. For example, we knew that Donald Trump's presidency would be consequential and in many ways unprecedented when we assumed the helm in June 2017, but not that he would become the first president to be impeached twice, or the first to attempt to overturn presidential election results and violently prevent the peaceful transfer of power, thereby threatening the republic's very foundations. We had no idea what COVID-19 was, or that it would go on to kill more than one million people in the United States alone. Nor could we foresee that the murder of George Floyd would spark the greatest wave of protest in the United States since the 1960s. Nor yet again did we know that more than seventy-five years after the end of World War II, there would be a major European land war between two former Soviet Republics. Yet we felt compelled to respond to each of these world historical moments as they unfolded in real time, while also attempting to modernize and innovate with respect to the journal's publication procedures and to stay true to its substantive mission.

During our editorship and at APSA's request, we modernized the journal by creating a new Dataverse page, initiating FirstView publication of articles, increasing open-access publication, and moving the book review process onto Editorial Manager. We also enhanced the journal's online presence by creating a Facebook page and investing a great deal of time and effort on Twitter, where we grew our number of followers from a figure in the hundreds to roughly 8,000 today. Finally, we moved to further internationalize the journal, inviting overseas based colleagues to join the board, and greatly increased the number of submissions, articles, and book reviews from scholars outside the United States.

We did all this while attempting to preserve the qualities of the journal that attracted us to editing *Perspectives on Politics* in the first place. In the spirit of our predecessors, and in keeping with the editorial vision

we laid out in 2017, we preserved the journal as a political science public sphere—endeavoring to publish scholarship of general interest, whether that focused on the burning issues of the day and the policy consequences related to them, enduring broad political science questions, or self-reflexive work related to the discipline writ large. We did so in a way that was deeply committed to pluralism and diversity across multiple dimensions. Critically, we tried to publish the best work from the broadest possible range of epistemological and methodological traditions. We did so in a fashion that remained faithful to the highest standards of logic and evidence on which our discipline is built, but also encouraged less specialized natural language that made the articles and book reviews accessible to a wide audience of professional political scientists and encouraged cross-field dialogue, while also appealing to interested laypeople. We maintained and attempted to amplify the journal's strong commitment to diversity, publishing authors who resembled the social, racial, ethnic, and gender composition of the population.

We also preserved the journal as the comprehensive book review of record for the American Political Science Association. To that end, it averaged over 350 books reviewed a year for our first five years, and by the time 2023 concludes we will have commissioned reviews for well over 2,000 books. *Perspectives on Politics* is unique as a flagship journal in that roughly one-third of its content in every issue is comprised of book reviews. This section provides a forum for intellectual exchange among scholars (including through our highly regarded Critical Dialogues format) as well as their readers. As such, it publicizes some of the most important research in the discipline and also functions as a vital service that supports both teaching and the peer review of colleagues, essential to the system of tenure and promotion that protects our academic freedom. Books, and therefore the review of them, remain at the core of political science as a professional discipline, and to this journal's intellectual mission in particular.

The most important substantive change we instituted during our editorship was to make thematic programming (special sections and special numbers devoted to a particular theme) into a consistent feature of each and every issue.

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This was possible because of the adoption of FirstView, allowing us to both publish pieces online while also holding them for thematic groupings in specific issues. We felt that thematic programming was a way to bring greater attention to the journal's content. In these special sections and special issues we also tried to bring together articles and reflections from multiple subfields to show that our discipline shares a set of mutual concerns and research questions despite our increasing interdisciplinary specialization. It is this last feature that we highlight here, in the final issue that we will assemble. The articles published here evoke the special sections and issues that we published in the last six years. Ironically, this will be the only issue we will publish without at least a section with a coherent thematic focus. Consider it a retrospective, something like a greatest hits album that also includes some new songs on familiar themes.

### Thematic Content, Old and New

The first special section we produced in 2017 (15:4) concerned "Problems of the State in the Developing World." This year (21:1) we devoted one to politics in "Las Américas." The themes of both of these special sections are captured in "City Size and Public Service Access: Evidence from Brazil and Indonesia," by Alison E. Post and Nicholas Kuipers. In this piece they concentrate on some of the fastest-growing localities globally—small and medium sized cities in the developing world. In contradiction to the literature that shows that large cities are superior in the delivery of public goods, they find that in areas like public health and education, smaller cities outperform larger ones in a large sample from Brazil. They hypothesize that this outcome is driven by the smaller urban problems of smaller cities, the smaller number of nonstate alternative service providers, and the ability of politicians to claim credit for the delivery of public services. The result is buttressed by comparative casework in both Brazil and Indonesia.

One of the fundamental issues in the creation and expansion of democracy is the struggle for the inclusion of populations denied the full rights of citizenship. We returned to this theme twice, first in a 2018 special section that addressed "The Politics of Inclusion and Exclusion" (16:1) from multiple perspectives and a second special section in 2021 that dealt with the complexities of the "The Politics of Immigration" (19:2). These themes are explored in the current issue by Shubha Kamala Prasad and Filip Savatic in "Diasporic Foreign Policy Interest Groups in the United States: Democracy, Conflict, and Political Entrepreneurship." Here the authors focus on why some diasporas create interest groups aiming to influence American foreign policy towards their region of origin. They theorize that the creation of successful interest groups of this sort is a product of two important factors: communal experience with democratic governance and the involvement of the

country of origin in conflict. They substantiate their argument with a new dataset that brings together information on interest groups and conditions in countries of origin, and a case study of the Indian-American lobby based on archival and interview evidence.

We also devoted a great deal of space to the drastic changes in American politics in the last decade. This figures in the special sections published in 2018 and 2021—on "The New (ab)Normal in American Politics" (16:2) and "Whither America?" (18:2). Amel Ahmed takes up one of the important questions along these lines in her reflection—"Is the American Public Really Turning Away from Democracy? Backsliding and the Conceptual Challenges of Understanding Public Attitudes." In this piece she notes how the "democracy at risk" literature focuses on documenting polarization in the United States, while devoting very little attention to what we mean by democracy. She argues that this can lead to faulty inference and bad conclusions for a number of reasons. First, it can lead to conflation of incremental change with categorical change. Second, ambiguity between the macro- and micro-levels can lead to misinterpretations of the impact of attitudinal change. And finally, different notions of democracy may interpret contentious behavior in different ways.

Questions of regime stability and change have generated a major body of work in comparative politics since at least the 1970s. In issue 16:3 (2018) we devoted a special section to "The Persistence of Authoritarianism." In this final issue Adam Przeworski, one of the pioneers of the application of formal models to problems of regime change, discusses their limitations in his reflection "Formal Models of Authoritarian Regimes: A Critique." He argues that democratic analysts have "tacit ideological assumptions" that limit their analyses. In the case of authoritarian regimes this has led many to overlook the complex psychological reasons why many citizens may voluntarily support authoritarian rule.

Technological change has always had an influence on the nature of politics. This is perhaps even more the case today as the pace of such change has accelerated astronomically. We took up this theme of contemporary technologically induced change in a special section on "Digital Politics" (16:4) in 2018. In her reflection on this theme in the current issue, Swati Srivastava looks at "Algorithmic Governance and the International Politics of Big Tech." Big Tech uses algorithms to make predictions for commercial purposes, but such decisions affect content visibility and thus have political impact in an era in which web-based content is the primary information source on which many citizens rely. This has important ramifications in many areas including the monitoring of citizen behavior by corporations and government, information pollution, bias, discrimination, and behavioral manipulation. Algorithms affect

the way in which states behave and interact with citizens. This is important for research in international relations in two ways: 1) algorithmic governance creates a new set of powerful private authorities that have massive power over communication, knowledge, and aspirations; and 2) it sets up both cooperation and conflict between states and Big Tech that affect the development of global politics in new ways.

One of the impacts of the “methods wars” in the discipline in the 1980s and 1990s was the creation of *Perspectives on Politics* as an outlet to promote methodological pluralism. That conflict also had the effect of spurring qualitative researchers to be more explicit in their methodological considerations. As such, *Perspectives* became a natural outlet for cutting-edge work in qualitative methods. Thus, we sponsored a special section on “Issues in Qualitative Research” (17:1) in 2019. We also devoted a special issue to the specifics of “Pandemic Politics” (20:2) in 2022. COVID-19 forced researchers to rethink the ways in which they could make inference while avoiding the kinds of personal contact that would put researchers, subjects, and the public health at risk. Lauren Konken and Marnie Howlett confront these questions in their contribution to the current issue, “When ‘Home’ Becomes the ‘Field:’ Ethical Considerations in Digital and Remote Fieldwork.” In this piece they discuss what sorts of new ethical obligations we face when we conduct research on places we cannot visit and with subjects with whom we cannot directly interact.

When we issued our call for papers for the special issue “Trump: Causes and Consequences,” we were overwhelmed by the volume and quality of submissions we received. We ended up publishing two issues devoted to this theme in 2019 (17:2-3). The papers on Trump have continued to come fast and furious. We have—many people are saying—never seen anything like this before! In this issue we return to Trump yet again with the publication of “Donald Trump and the Lie” by Rory Truex and Kevin Arceneux. The acceptance of electoral outcomes by losers like Trump is central to democratic legitimation. The denial of Joe Biden’s victory in the presidential election of 2020 by Trump and the MAGA faithful challenges democracy in America. Truex and Arceneux study the evolution of public opinion on this issue in the year following the election. During this period the number of voters who bought into the lie, which Trump repeated incessantly, was substantial and the level of belief remained consistent. On this basis they predicted that the lie would persist into the next election cycle and this certainly holds for the midterms of 2022. The question remains whether it will carry over into the 2024 general election given its poor performance last year. Initial reports from candidate Trump suggest that he is more committed to the Big Lie than ever, much to

the detriment of the nearly 250-year American experiment in self-government.

From its inception, scholarship in political theory has always had an important place in *Perspectives on Politics*. Issue 17.4 featured a special section entitled “Perspectival Political Theory,” focusing on the myriad ways in which political theorists address crucial normative questions related to the problem of power and its multiple manifestations, consequences, and ongoing legacies. Inder Singh Marwah’s article, “Darwin in India: Anticolonial Evolutionism at the Dawn of the Twentieth Century” adds to this thematic focus. Marwah demonstrates how early twentieth-century anti-colonial Indian thinkers reconfigured the language of social Darwinism, commonly understood as a discourse justifying imperialism, to deconstruct notions of historical time that framed India as politically immature and therefore ripe for tutelary rule by the British. More broadly, while remaining sensitive to the problems raised by Indian nationalists’ deployment of evolutionism, Marwah clearly shows that a close engagement with history can produce counterintuitive conclusions about the emancipatory possibilities of political discourse when ideas travel to new geographical and cultural contexts, and are developed syncretically in previously unimagined fashion by those seeking liberation from colonialism.

In issue 18:3 (2020) we published a number of articles that explored “The Uses of Violence” in many political contexts, gauging its intended and unintended consequences for the groups targeted and the evolution of the political system. In issue 18:4 (2020) a special section on “The Glass Ceiling” looked at a range of different themes in the study of women and politics, including the uses of violence to deny women full voice in the political arena. These themes are taken up here in “Three Dimensions of Gendered Online Abuse: Analyzing Swedish MPs’ Experiences of Social Media” by Josefina Erikson, Sandra Håkansson, and Cecilia Josefsson. They show that despite the increase in women’s representation, their participation is subject to significant barriers. They explore this through a comparison of the online abuse suffered by male and female politicians. Using survey data provided by Members of Parliament in Sweden, the authors look at the comparative frequency, character, and consequences of online harassment. They find that the level of abuse across genders is not significantly different, but the kind of abuse to which women are subjected is considerably more sexualized and gendered. At high levels of harassment, men are a little more likely to leave politics than women, but women generally feel that their agency is more circumscribed by harassment than men do.

In issue 19:1 (2021) we did a special section that looked at the politics of the working class—“Working Class Blues?” The heyday of when the working class provided the backbone of labor, socialist, and other left parties has

passed. In many economically developed liberal democracies there has been party realignment with some working-class populations moving rightward, and the left incorporating other social groups, depending on context. In “Lost in Translation? Class Cleavage Roots and Left Electoral Mobilization in Western Europe,” Vincenzo Emanuele examines if class is still a driver of electoral mobilization on the left in nineteen Western European democracies post-World War II. Focusing on both the socio-structural and organizational basis of working-class politics, he finds that the organizational dimension has weakened markedly in the last twenty-years, but that social structure still predicts left mobilization. Thus, class remains salient to the political left, but the trade union and political parties that organized the West European working class have become increasingly less important over time.

We brought together several pieces that engaged in “Comparative Historical Analysis” in issue 19:3 (2021) and considered the basis for democratic backsliding in one region in a special section on “The Postcommunist Democratic Failure” (20:1) in 2022. In this issue, David Samuels takes up the role of global actors in the current democratic recession in “The International Context of Democratic Backsliding: Rethinking the Role of Third Wave ‘Pro-Democracy’ Global Actors.” He analyzes the impact of the reconfiguration of the international system in the post-Cold-War period and argues that the main pro-democratic actors identified by Samuel Huntington in *The Third Wave*—the United States, the European Union, and the Vatican—have weaker incentives to stand up for democracy, despite aggressive support for authoritarian alternatives by Russia and China.

We devoted considerable space to the politics of race in the United States in two special issues. In 2021, 19:4 was a special issue on “Race and Politics in America.” We followed this up with a special issue on the “Black Lives Matter” movement, guest edited by Christopher Sebastian Parker (20:4, 2022). In this issue Hannah Walker, Sergio Garcia-Rios, Nazita Lajevardi, and Kassra Oskooii consider “The Participatory Implications of Racialized Policy Feedbacks.” Here they examine whether interaction with authoritarian political institutions stifles participation by Blacks, Latinos, and Asian Americans. It is possible that instead of having demobilizing effects, such interactions could motivate individuals to become more engaged. They find that the effect is contingent on the psychological disposition of those affected. Specifically, those with stronger group identities are more likely to become politically engaged when exposed to authoritarian institutions.

At the beginning of our tenure at *Perspectives* we thought long and hard about issuing a call for papers on populism. We were not able to come up with a novel enough angle on the topic, but in 2022 we did manage to do a special section on “Populism Revisited” (20:3). In this issue Joseph Cerrone investigates the nationalist character

of right populism in relation to the global alliance of rightwing parties in “Reconciling National and Supranational Identities: Civilizationism in European Far-Right Discourse.” He discusses how such groups discursively navigate this tension through linking nationalism to a notion of defending European civilization. He documents the existence of this supranational “imagined community” through an analysis of over 1,000 party manifestos and more than 650,000 tweets.

Our recapitulation of themes from previous issues in this current issue does not include a piece that speaks to the special section in the last issue—“Green Political Science” (21:2). We also were not able to commemorate one other special section, “Celebrity and Politics,” that appeared in issue 18:1 (2020). That section was developed and guest-edited by our board member Samantha Majic.

## Thank-Yous

Looking backward, we are very grateful to our predecessor Jeff Isaac for being exceptionally patient and generous with his time, and for his consistent willingness to offer invaluable advice as we learned the ropes of editing *Perspectives on Politics*. Looking forward, we are very grateful that Ana Arjona and Wendy Pearlman have agreed to take on the responsibility of editing the journal as our successors. Both Ana and Wendy are extremely talented and accomplished scholars of comparative politics whose work itself is in the best tradition of the journal’s commitment to cutting-edge research that embraces a variety of epistemological and methodological approaches. We know through several long discussions with them that they share the values that have enabled *Perspectives* to occupy a unique space in the discipline, and we believe that they will take the journal to still greater heights. We wish them the best of luck in doing so, though their records of achievement assure us that luck will hardly be necessary. While Ana and Wendy will focus on the peer-reviewed article (or “front”) side of the journal, we trust that APSA will find a new Book Review Editor for the “back” side as well, such that *Perspectives on Politics* can continue to fulfill its crucial role as the comprehensive book review of record for the association.

For six years, we have been exceptionally fortunate to have Dr. Jennifer Boylan as our Managing Editor. Jen’s extraordinary work ethic, preternatural ability for multi-tasking, and mind-boggling capacities for organizing complex systems have been at the very heart of the journal’s success. One of the reasons we are so confident about *Perspectives’* future is that Jen will be staying on as Managing Editor, lending her considerable talents and sharing her wealth of accumulated experiential knowledge to the new editorial team. We thank Jen for all that she has given to her post. We simply could not have done this without her.

Nor could we have edited the journal without a truly talented and dedicated group of Editorial Assistants at the University of Florida. When we assumed the editorial helm in 2017, we explained to the graduate students that they would be pivotal to our collective success—or failure. This is not hyperbole. *Perspectives on Politics* has reviewed over 3,000 articles and commissioned reviews of over 2,000 books in the past 6 years, and this is more work than any two editors can possibly do alone. We *needed* help. Thus, whatever success the journal has had under our editorship is owing in important measure to the passionate dedication and intellect of all the Editorial Assistants who have worked tirelessly to ensure that a massive number of articles and books were reviewed expertly and efficiently. We thank all of them for their wholehearted “buy in” to the endeavor and wish them all success in their future endeavors. They were Stephanie Denardo, Alec Dinnin, Graham Gallagher, Peter Licari, Karla Mundim, Kelly Richardson, Nicholas Rudnik, Marah Schlingensiepen, Dragana Svraka, and Saskia van Wees.

We also owe a debt of gratitude to Mark Zadrozny and his team at Cambridge University Press, who expertly and collegially produced, marketed, and distributed the journal, including Jim Ansell, Gail Naron Chalew, Andrew Hyde, Linda Lindenfelser, David Mainwaring, Lauren Marra, Brian Mazeski, Alyssa Neumann, Molly Sheffer, Gavin Swanson, Katrina Swartz, and Lucie Taylor. The global pandemic in particular created multiple unprecedented challenges for academic publishing, and we thank our partners at CUP for working closely with us to surmount them.

We thank the leadership and publication team at APSA for their faith in us and for their ongoing efforts to make *Perspectives on Politics* a true disciplinary flagship journal: Steven R. Smith, Jon Gurstelle, Madison Dewey, and Karima Scott. We are indebted to the Department of Political Science and Dean David Richardson at the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences at the University of Florida for giving us the course releases, physical space, and other resources necessary to undertake this effort. We appreciate the remarkable efforts of our dedicated Editorial Board, who have provided endless support and encouragement, as well as timely and expert advice on a range of complex issues.<sup>1</sup> Finally, to all those who have joined members of the Editorial Board in refereeing articles, writing book reviews, and submitting manuscripts to the journal, we are buoyed

and heartened by your commitment to intellectual life and to the discipline of political science, and by your excellence as scholars. We have learned a great deal from all of you.

## Passings

Six years is a long time, and inevitably involves loss. While much of academic life focuses exclusively on the mind, the heart is equally important, and we would like to conclude by honoring it.

This issue includes a review of *Activist Origins of Political Ambition* by Keith Weghorst (2022). He wrote his dissertation under the direction of Michael Bernhard and Staffan Lindberg at the University of Florida. Keith died of leukemia on March 30, 2023, preventing him from ever taking up his position as an Assistant Professor at the V-Dem Institute at Gothenburg University. Keith leaves behind his wife Kristin Michelitch, an accomplished political scientist, and two adorable young daughters, Josephine and Margot. He will be missed for his friendship, sense of humor, and warmth. We will never get to fully appreciate the contributions to the study of African politics of which he was capable.

Dan O’Neill would like to dedicate his editorship of *Perspectives on Politics* to his parents, Chuck and Mary, both of whom passed away during it. Though neither of them received a college degree, both of them believed in the great power of learning, while also teaching him the enduring working-class values of unremitting effort and honoring one’s commitments, come what may. They are deeply loved and truly missed.

During his time at *Perspectives on Politics*, Michael Bernhard also lost both his parents, Ruthe and Harry. They too were loved and are missed. He is indebted to them for their commitment to education, openness to diverse viewpoints and people, and conviction that nothing can be accomplished without hard work. His work here is dedicated to their memory.

## Note

1 See here: <https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/perspectives-on-politics/information/editorial-board>.

## Reference

Weghorst, Keith. 2022. *Activist Origins of Political Ambition*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

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# Statement of Mission and Procedures

*Perspectives on Politics* seeks to provide a space for broad and synthetic discussion within the political science profession and between the profession and the broader scholarly and reading publics. Such discussion necessarily draws on and contributes to the scholarship published in the more specialized journals that dominate our discipline. At the same time, *Perspectives* seeks to promote a complementary form of broad public discussion and synergistic understanding within the profession that is essential to advancing scholarship and promoting academic community.

*Perspectives* seeks to nurture a **political science public sphere**, publicizing important scholarly topics, ideas, and innovations, linking scholarly authors and readers, and promoting broad reflexive discussion among political scientists about the work that we do and why this work matters.

*Perspectives* publishes work in a number of formats that mirror the ways that political scientists actually write:

**Research articles:** As a top-tier journal of political science, *Perspectives* accepts scholarly research article submissions and publishes the very best submissions that make it through our double-blind system of peer review and revision. The only thing that differentiates *Perspectives* research articles from other peer-reviewed articles at top journals is that we focus our attention only on work that in some way bridges subfield and methodological divides, and tries to address a broad readership of political scientists about matters of consequence. This typically means that the excellent articles we publish have been extensively revised in sustained dialogue with the editors to address

not simply questions of scholarship but questions of intellectual breadth and readability.

“Reflections” are more reflexive, provocative, or programmatic essays that address important political science questions in interesting ways but are not necessarily as systematic and focused as research articles. These essays often originate as research article submissions, though sometimes they derive from proposals developed in consultation with the editor in chief. Unlike research articles, these essays are not evaluated according to a strict, double-blind peer review process. But they are typically vetted informally with editorial board members or other colleagues, and they are always subjected to critical assessment and careful line-editing by the editor and editorial staff.

Scholarly symposia, critical book dialogues, book review essays, and conventional book reviews are developed and commissioned by the Associate and Book Review Editor, based on authorial queries and ideas, editorial board suggestions, and staff conversations.

*Everything* published in *Perspectives* is carefully vetted and edited. Given our distinctive mission, we work hard to use our range of formats to organize interesting conversations about important issues and events, and to call attention to certain broad themes beyond our profession’s normal subfield categories.

For further details on writing formats and submission guidelines, see our website at <http://www.apsanet.org/perspectives/>