

Green Political Science

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The Presidential Address

Each year we have the honor to publish an article version of the APSA Presidential Address. In the six years we have done this John Ishiyama is the first comparativist whose work we have featured in this capacity. He presently holds an appointment as University Distinguished Research Professor of Political Science at the University of North Texas. John has long been a fixture in the subfield of comparative politics for his contributions on democratization, political parties, and ethnic politics in both the post-Soviet region and Africa. He has also written extensively on teaching, publishing, and assessment in political science. He has published over 150 articles. And while the outlets and subject matter are too diverse to summarize succinctly, we do want to mention that “The Politics of Intercountry Adoption: Explaining Variation in the Legal Requirements of Sub-Saharan African Countries,” coauthored with Marijke Breuning, won the 2010 APSA Heinz Eulau Award for Best Journal Article published in *Perspectives on Politics* during the previous year (2009).

John is not only an outstanding scholar. Few can match his service contributions to the discipline. In addition to just completing his term as APSA President, he served as the lead editor for the *American Political Science Review* (2012–2016) and the *Journal of Political Science Education* (2004–2012). He also has a remarkable record as a promoter of undergraduate research. During his time at Truman State University, he served a number of important roles in the McNair Post-Baccalaureate Achievement Program and at UNT led a program for a decade to promote undergraduate research in Conflict Management and Peace Science that was sponsored by the NSF. John has been indispensable in mentoring first-generation college students and in encouraging their passion for research. Colleagues have spoken of John’s centrality for their choice to become a professional political scientist. We are pleased when we see applications to graduate school by undergraduates schooled by John, because we know they have already been socialized to research and have taken the first steps on the road to becoming skillful researchers themselves. This combination of an ethic of service and the integration of research with

undergraduate education marks Ishiyama as a unique figure in the discipline.

John’s presidential address, “Whither Political Science in a Post-Pandemic World? Challenges, Trends, and Opportunities,” is a piece in this spirit. He considers how we might rethink the teaching of political science at all levels (K–12, undergraduate, and graduate) in the face of the challenges to democracy of the present age. For Ishiyama, political science is a set of skills that allows those trained in it to identify problems, analyze them, and use the evidence collected to pose solutions. Furthermore, when informed by ethical aims, the method allows us to use power to achieve positive ends. The rethinking of what we do is necessary because of several overlapping trends: 1) disengagement of citizens from the democratic process, 2) new technologies that enable innovative forms of pedagogy, and 3) the necessity of demonstrating our value as a discipline in a world where academia is increasingly assessed by metrics.

The first is of critical importance for the health of our country. Ishiyama cites recent public opinion polling that shows an appalling lack of basic political knowledge about our system among our fellow citizens. While there are reasons to be concerned about the current level of polarization in the country, this also means that interest in politics is higher than it has been in the recent past. This may constitute an opportunity to raise the level of civic awareness.

To respond to these challenges John has created a Presidential Task Force chaired by Michelle Deardorff and David Lake. It will reexamine our assumptions about the skills and knowledge that our students need for a changing world. This will determine how we will train graduate students to meet the future needs of the discipline. It is clear that civic education needs to be a critical part of this initiative. We need to get back to a place where disagreement is not labelled as treason, and find a way to teach a version of our own history where our mistakes and failures are not treated as blank spots in the record.

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In November 2022, United Nations Secretary General António Guterres issued a dire warning to delegates

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gathered in Sharm El-Sheik, Egypt, for the 27th annual Conference of the Parties to the United Nations climate convention (COP27), stating bluntly: “We are on a highway to climate hell with our foot on the accelerator.”¹ Guterres’ conclusion followed fast upon his assessment of the recent report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, which he declared revealed “a litany of broken climate promises. It is a file of shame, cataloguing the empty pledges that put us firmly on track towards an unlivable world.” Guterres briefly mentioned some of the consequences predicted by climate scientists in the near future as a result of such broken promises: “Major cities underwater. Unprecedented heatwaves. Terrifying storms. Widespread water shortages. The extinction of a million species of plants and animals. This is not fiction or exaggeration. It is what science tells us will result from our current energy policies.” He noted further that we are well on the way to more than doubling the 1.5-degree Celsius global temperature increase that scientists believe marks the threshold beyond which we can expect such cataclysmic consequences.² As but one sign of the direction matters are headed in, consider the recent loss of biodiversity in part attributable to climate change. The 2022 Living Planet Index estimates a roughly 69% decrease in monitored wildlife populations analyzed since 1970 (based on 32,000 such species populations).³ Of course, not all biodiversity loss is attributable to climate change (habitat loss and predation still outrank it). Nevertheless, the scale of such loss indicates that the climate crisis is trending in a frightening direction.

At the same time the scientific consensus concerning climate change, as well as the lived experience of its consequences by increasing numbers of human beings worldwide, seems at long last to be spurring at least some meaningful action aimed at warding off the worst-case outcomes. In the United States, at the federal level we can point to President Biden’s new infrastructure bill, which includes \$50 billion to help fight climate change.⁴ Nor are states waiting for Washington to act. California Governor Gavin Newsome has signed an aggressive and ambitious executive order aimed in part at banning the sale of internal combustion engines for passenger cars and pickup trucks in the state by 2035.⁵ Similarly, the European Union just passed a deal to ban the sale of new gasoline- and diesel-powered cars and vans by that same date.⁶ As of now, more than twenty other countries are scheduled to make similar moves in the near future.⁷ And at a recently concluded meeting in Canada, approximately 190 nations approved an agreement to protect 30% of the planet’s lands and oceans, and included additional measures aimed at preventing biodiversity loss from climate change, as well as from a range of other factors including land clearing and deforestation.⁸ Whether such moves will be deep enough, widespread enough, and come soon enough to avoid the climate hell

towards which we are speeding full throttle remains an open question.

Perspectives has a history of publishing on the problems of climate change and politics. It was a recurring theme during Jeff Isaac’s time as editor. The contribution of the journal in this regard is not nearly as important as that of more specialized journals like *Environmental Politics*⁹ or *Global Environmental Politics*¹⁰ or forays by political scientists into natural science fora like *Science*¹¹, but nevertheless remains significant.

One of our early efforts in this area made a big splash in international relations. In “The Regime Complex for Climate Change,” Robert Keohane and David Victor (2011) pointed out the lack of an integrated international regime for combatting climate change and described an alternate governance structure of loosely structured regimes with narrower charges. While they pointed out that such a structure of governance could have potential advantages in being more flexible or adaptable, they feared that its inability to coordinate the efforts of states with varying commitments and interests meant that its ability to meet goals like limiting global warming to two degrees would be difficult. We wish their analysis was less prescient.

Perspectives also published an important reflection by Deborah Javeline (2014) entitled “The Most Important Topic Political Scientists Are Not Studying: Adapting to Climate Change.” This essay lamented the lack of political science research and expertise on climate change, arguing that it was the most important problem of our era and that this absence was tragic because the problem of addressing its effects was a political problem. She also documented the rise of a new interdisciplinary effort to pose solutions to how we could adapt to climate change and noted that political science was largely absent from that effort. She highlighted such subjects as the costs of higher levels of migratory displacement and the propensity for conflict. Given how the European refugee crisis of 2015 and the lack of a coherent emigration policy in the United States abetted the election of Donald Trump, the former observation was important, and even more so, given the impact that both these events had on democratic backsliding in both regions. And while Javeline concentrated on how climate change might diminish conflict, the opposite was in fact true. We know that scarcity, domestic crises, and demographic pressures, as frequent corollaries of climate change, all contribute to conflict and have played a role in many of the internal wars that have dominated global conflict in our age.

We are proud of the journal’s contributions on this topic, and by publishing this special section we seek to build on that legacy and to continue to create space for considerations of the impact of climate change on politics in the political science mainstream. We are particularly pleased that our current issue includes pieces in American

Politics, Comparative Politics, International Relations, and Political Theory.

The first article, “What Stymies Action on Climate Change? Religious Institutions, Marginalization, and Efficacy in Kenya,” by Amy Erica Smith, Lauren Honig, and Jaimie Bleck examines the difficulty of formulating policy responses to climate change in developing countries. Kenya is quite vulnerable to climate change and has a history of environmental activism. Despite this, mobilizing support is difficult. In examining a broad range of factors, the authors find that Muslim Kenyans have a much lower sense of efficacy vis-à-vis the state despite very similar levels of concern about climate change. In this case, a legacy of discrimination impacts the ability of humans to address this pressing problem.

Bentley Allan and Jonas Meckling focus on the role of ideas in effecting policy change in “Creative Learning and Policy Ideas: The Global Rise of Green Growth.” They look at how officials in international organizations (IOs) respond to problems by creating new concepts and policy ideas. They identify three different creative ideational modes of learning practiced by IO officials—conceptual combination, translation, and repurposing. They then use them to show how these modes were deployed in discourses about green growth, or the idea that adaptation can have positive economic impact, since 2005.

Samuel Trachtman examines energy policy at the level of individual states in “Policy Feedback and Interdependence in American Federalism: Evidence from Rooftop Solar Politics.” Drawing on the policy feedback literature he considers how state-level reforms work to strengthen particular interests and how this newfound strength leads to further reforms. This dynamic can also drive policy diffusion across states. In the case of regulation of rooftop solar power systems, he shows how the solar installation industry gained strength in several innovative states and has used that to advance policies congruent to its interests in additional states.

Benjamin Cashore and Steven Bernstein argue that political science has not been as uninfluential in the debate about climate adaptation as has been often claimed. In “Bringing the Environment Back In: Overcoming the Tragedy of the Diffusion of the Commons Metaphor” they argue that ideas from Elinor Ostrom’s classic work (1990) underlies a large volume of the literature on sustainability. They identify four ideal type conceptualizations of the problem of sustainability and consider their relationship to Ostrom’s work: 1) commons, 2) economic optimization, 3) compromise, and 4) prioritization. They argue that the first three perspectives incorporate the insights of her work on the commons in focusing on the management of human material interests in their approach. The fourth, prioritization, rejects the logic of the commons, seeing the pursuit of material interests as at

the root of environmental degradation. To the extent that the fourth logic holds, they argue that political scientists will need to change their fundamental understanding to propose solutions to ameliorate environmental crises.

Given that ranchers, farmers, and foresters have an important stake in the quality of the environment, Emily Diamond fills a gap in the literature by examining the state of environmentalism in rural America. Her findings in “Understanding Rural Identities and Environmental Policy Attitudes in America” are based on eight focus groups and thirty-five interviews with rural voters across America. She studies how attitudes towards nature, feelings of resentment/disenfranchisement, connection to place and an ethic of self-reliance help to shape the environmental policy preferences of rural Americans.

Leigh S. Raymond, Daniel Kelly, and Erin Hennes draw lessons for governance from studying our difficulties in taking decisive action in the face of existential threats in “Norm-Based Governance for Severe Collective Action Problems: Lessons from Climate Change and COVID-19.” They argue that the conditions under which we must address these problems, severe polarization and widespread disinformation, make solving them particularly difficult. Based on the insight that norms and informal rules play a huge role in solving collective action problems, they survey recent advances in this literature from outside political science. They note several insights which may help us to solve treacherous collective action problems of this sort.

In “Environmental Warfare Tactics in Irregular Conflicts” Anna Feuer discusses how nature could be weaponized in irregular conflict. Under what conditions would parties to a conflict resort to environmental degradation, from short term damage to ecocide, to gain advantage? Feuer identifies the types of incentives and constraints that operate in such situations and illustrates the utility of her typology using the case of the draining of the Mesopotamian marshes by Saddam Hussein’s forces in Iraq.

In “Climate Change and the Politics of Responsibility,” Michael Goodhart theorizes the politics of responsibility, understood as activist struggles over who will be held accountable for structural injustices like catastrophic climate change. To do so, he develops a politicized conception of responsibility that treats it as the social practice of interrogating and contesting shared ethico-political judgments. In Goodhart’s understanding, taking responsibility provides us a way of (re)constructing social practices and judgments through conscious efforts to persuade others, challenge prevailing norms and interpretations, change people’s beliefs about how the world works, revise the popular expectations of social actors and institutions, and disrupt business as usual.

Our special section concludes with a reflection by Sugandha Srivastav and Ryan Rafaty. They examine the

ways in which entrenched hydrocarbon interests lobby against change in the energy economy. In “Political Strategies to Overcome Climate Policy Obstructionism,” they specify five different strategies for overcoming resistance: 1) compensating losers, 2) coopting existing interests to participate in change, 3) institutional change, 4) increasing the costs of obstruction through litigation or reputational costs, and 5) increasing the competitiveness of low carbon energy.

Other Content

We also have additional terrific material in this issue beyond the thematic content. In “Causal Pathways of Rebel Defection from Negotiated Settlements: A Theory of Strategic Alliances,” Chelsea Johnson explores tensions between large-*n* and in-depth data in the study of internal war. She examines the ways in which negotiated settlements to conflict break down. Working with a case that is oversimplified in dyadic coding, the failure of the peace process in Uganda, she expounds a theory of why rebel groups defect from settlements. The paper then tests this theory in a large-*n* framework for Sub-Saharan Africa (1975–2015) using causal process observations (CPOs). These aggregated results provide strong evidence that the process revealed in the case analysis—“defection-by-alliance pathway”—is underappreciated in the literature. The paper shows how dialogue between large-*n* and small-*n* work can lead to better data and improve our understanding of important political processes.

Ronald R. Krebs, Robert Ralston, and Aaron Rapport focus on the influential notion that civil authorities, accountable to the electorate, rather than military officers, are best qualified to decide when to employ force and determine military strategy in democracies. In “No Right to Be Wrong: What Americans Think about Civil-Military Relations,” they report on public opinion polling that shows that public belief is not in line with this reasoning. They find that many Americans are deferential to the military in terms of when to use force and are comfortable with intervention by the military in policy debates. Partisanship plays a role in these findings as well. Republicans are less deferential to military officers than Democrats, while Democrats are more likely to want the military to act as a check on presidents with whom they disagree.

In “Care for a Profit?,” Luara Ferracioli and Stephanie Collins argue that it is morally problematic to have for-profit corporations provide care for young people and the elderly. However, rather than making an empirical argument, they develop a philosophical case about the nature of the relationship between a care organization, its role-occupants, and care recipients. They argue that the connection between profit and lower-quality care is ultimately a result of intrinsic features of the for-profit model itself, once one has a proper understanding of the conceptual

features of meaningful caring relationships. For this reason, they argue that non-profit organizations are the most reliable institutional providers of adequate care. The strong version of their claim is that appropriate care requires a kind of commitment that for-profit institutions are built to avoid, and that non-profit institutions are built to embrace.

Until recently the costs of war on those who waged it were unrecognized or hidden. In “Blurring the Boundaries of War: PTSD in American Foreign Policy Discourse” Adam Lerner looks at the politics of post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and its impact on American foreign policy. He uses a mixed-methods approach to survey the discourse in both the executive and congressional branches. The first finding of the paper is that PTSD only emerged as an issue during the 2008 presidential election. The second is that it has blurred the “spatiotemporal lines” around war in recognizing that war continues to have effects even after the fighting stops. This has important ramifications for the concept of victimhood in war.

This issue concludes with a reflection on how to manage abusive virtual communication. In “Short of Suspension: How Suspension Warnings Can Reduce Hate Speech on Twitter,” Mikdat Yildirim, Jonathan Nagler, Richard Bonneau, and Joshua A. Tucker experimentally assess the degree to which warnings can reduce hate speech on that platform. They find that a credible threat will reduce the level of hate speech in the short term. They also find that framing the warning in ways that are legitimate in the eyes of the person warned are more effective. The policy implication is that a more proactive system of warning would help to reduce hate speech and could potentially reduce the need to suspend users for abusive online behavior.

Notes

- 1 Somini Sengupta, “‘A Reason to Act Faster’: World Leaders Meet on Climate Amid Other Crises,” *New York Times*, November 7, 2022 (<https://www.nytimes.com/2022/11/07/climate/climate-change-crisis-cop27.html>). We thank Leslie Paul Thiele for advice on this and the following paragraph.
- 2 “Message from UN Secretary António Guterres on the Launch of the Third IPCC Report,” April 5, 2022 (<https://laopdr.un.org/en/176912-message-un-secretary-antonio-guterres-launch-third-ipcc-report>).
- 3 <https://livingplanet.panda.org/en-US/>
- 4 Emma Newburger, “Biden’s Infrastructure Bill Includes \$50 Billion to Fight Climate Change Disasters,” *CNBC.com*, November 15, 2021 (<https://www.cnn.com/2021/11/15/biden-signs-infrastructure-bill-how-it-fights-climate-change.html>).
- 5 Jennifer L. Hernandez, Marne S. Sussman, Letitia D. Moore, and Kevin J. Ashe, “California Governor

Bans Internal Combustion Engines, Effective 2035, to Combat Climate Change,” *Holland & Knight Alert*, September 24, 2020 (<https://www.hklaw.com/en/insights/publications/2020/09/california-governor-bans-internal-combustion-engines>).

- 6 “EU Approves Ban on New Combustion-Engine Cars from 2035,” APnews.com, October 28, 2022 (<https://apnews.com/article/europe-business-european-parliament-climate-and-environment-a9c3f6c3c123ede7566ae7425b4f7181>).
- 7 Kevin Joshua Ng, “List of Countries Banning Internal Combustion Engines in the Near Future,” eCompareMo.com, April 27, 2021 (<https://www.ecomparemo.com/info/list-of-countries-banning-internal-combustion-engines-in-the-near-future>).
- 8 Catrin Einhorn, “Nearly Every Country Signs On to a Sweeping Deal to Protect Nature,” *New York Times*, December 19, 2022 (<https://www.nytimes.com/2022/12/19/climate/biodiversity-cop15-montreal-30x30.html?searchResultPosition=3>).
- 9 <https://www.tandfonline.com/toc/fenp20/current>

10 <https://direct.mit.edu/glep>

11 <https://www.science.org/>

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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:

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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.

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