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## In this Issue

Yvonne Galligan

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The first issue of Volume 32 brings together an eclectic range of articles touching on key concerns in political science today. Explanations for economic growth in dictatorial regimes are rare, and this is the subject of Abel Escribà-Folch's article 'Group strength, accountability and growth under dictatorship'. In it, he argues that when dictators are faced with a strong citizen opposition or a greater military threat, they respond by improving economic growth rates to the benefit of these groups. This strategy defuses challenges to a dictator's hold on power. Importantly, Escribà-Folch demonstrates that elites, the third locus of potential opposition to a dictatorial regime, do not exert pressure on a dictator to grow the economy. Thus, economic growth in the context of a dictatorial regime can be understood as either citizens or military exerting a measure of political accountability from a dictator in return for survival in power.

The importance of economic development is not confined to dictatorships, but is instead a significant factor for public support in liberal democracies. This is the theme of Peter Kotzian's contribution, 'Public support for liberal democracy'. Focusing on system-level features, Kotzian distinguishes between the role of systemic and individual factors in determining support for liberal democracy, and finds that the health of an economy is by far the strongest predictor of public support in a democratic regime. In an echo of the previous article, he shows that citizens in non-democratic regimes also support the political arrangements when the economy is performing well.

In a closely-argued article, Hans Agné tackles the ambitious task of finding common ground between two major fields of scholarship. His research on 'The autonomy of globalizing states: bridging the gap between democratic theory and international political economy' addresses their opposing understanding of how globalization affects advanced capitalist states autonomy. This theoretical controversy, he argues, rests on their different definitions of state autonomy and their respective implications for empirical measurement. He suggests that a way forward can be found by adopting a normatively-sensitive definition of autonomy in terms of possible, rather than realized, actions, namely the capacity of government to perform alternative and varied political actions, undetermined by internal minorities or foreign powers. Empirically operationalized, it observes autonomy in the pursuit of policy regardless as to whether the government prefers the policy or not, and absence of autonomy is observed only in the abstention from policies that a government actually wants to pursue.

The capacity of the people to control government, particularly at election time, is the subject of Frank Liu's article 'Perceived partisan heterogeneity in communication networks and changes in party choice in a national election: evidence from Taiwan'. He highlights the significance of volatility among partisan voters in a close election, and the decisive impact such voters have on the final outcome. In so doing, he subjects Beck's (2002) social support theory of partisan defection to empirical testing by means of the 2004 presidential election in Taiwan. The testing extends the application of the original theory from a stable two-party context (the United States) to a young

democracy with a different historical trajectory and party system. While he finds that while the single Taiwan case does not provide sufficient evidence for extending the theory, it does open the way for more nuanced research into voter volatility.

The second case study with global application takes a policy issue, health care delivery, and examines how various fiscal, political and social pressures shape health-care delivery in two Canadian provinces. Howard A. Palley, Marie-Pascale Pomey and Pierre-Gerlier Forest scrutinise how the mix of public and private health care delivery combine in 'Examining private and public provision in Canada's provincial health care systems: comparing Ontario and Quebec'. They identify the development of new technologies, pharmaceutical innovations, competing fiscal demands, and an aging population as leading to some erosion of publicly-provided health services as well as the growth of private commercial health care organizations. They contrast developments in these two provincial health-care systems in a federal context that requires some meeting of federal stipulations in order to receive federal funding for public health-care provision, when issues of economic and political sustainability are to the fore. The authors believe that similar pressures exist in a number of other national health delivery systems and that they often involve a dynamic relationship between public and private provision of health care delivery.

The final essay in this issue is the second part of Jean Leca's encyclopaedic review of political philosophy over six decades. He begins by discussing trends in contemporary political philosophy before considering the challenge it faces in trying to be universally valid while being pressured to respond to the local conventions of an age or civilization. He tackles the challenge posed by the assertion of cultural, and other, identities to political philosophy. Leca ends his *tour de force* with a plea for logical thinking, by political philosophers and political scientists alike so as, in the words of Weber, to 'tackle the impossible' in order to 'achieve the possible' in this world.

Yvonne Galligan