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This issue of *IPSR* is rich testimony to the broad scope of contemporary political science, including the endlessly varied questions that scholars study, the regions of the world in which problems are studied, the theoretical perspectives and methodologies that inform research, and – perhaps most important – interpretations of the causes of political developments and their consequences for human well being. Perhaps the capacious scope of our discipline should not be surprising: it faithfully reflects the incredible variety of political conflicts, institutions, regimes, identities, policies – the list is endless – that comprise the world of politics!

The issue opens with two articles on Africa, a region receiving less attention from political scientists than most. Stein Sundstøl Eriksen's 'Regimes, Constituencies and the Politics of State Formation: Zimbabwe and Botswana Compared' studies a classic question in our discipline, at the forefront of a research program pursued in recent decades by Barrington Moore, Charles Tilly, Theda Skocpol, Samuel Huntington, Peter Gourevitch, and many others: what explains the strength of the state? Eriksen's comparison of Zimbabwe and Botswana enables him to question some conventional explanations of state strength and to corroborate others. In particular, he suggests, the answer hinges on whether or not ruling elites calculate that their interests are served by a strong state and whether, if they do, they have the capacity to implement a state-building project. He further claims that these factors are heavily influenced by the relationship of state elites to their domestic constituencies.

Like Eriksen's article, Renske Doorenspleet's 'Critical Citizens, Democratic Support and Satisfaction in African Democracies' highlights the importance of citizen attitudes and also selects Africa as the laboratory in which to study the issue. The article broadens the purview to eight African democracies in an attempt to understand why some citizens support democracy while at the same time they are not satisfied with the functioning of the political system. Doorenspleet also seeks to understand how the distribution of attitudes and political activism affects satisfaction/dissatisfaction.

Stephen Ceccoli and William Hixon's 'Explaining Attitudes toward Genetically Modified Foods in the European Union' involves a shift in regional and issue focus but, like the articles by Eriksen and Doorenspleet, seeks to understand the basis for political beliefs. Ceccoli and Hixon compare the relative weight of scientific knowledge, media coverage, and trust in regulatory institutions in shaping attitudes toward the safety of genetically modified foods. To paraphrase their major finding: the truth (that is, wisdom or knowledge) shall make ye free!

In 'What Makes the Substantive Representation of Women Possible in a Westminster Parliament? The Story of RU486 in Australia,' Marian Sawyer studies the institutional and other factors that are necessary to bring about women-sensitive policy change in parliament. She finds that the expected conditions – critical mass, critical actors and critical juncture – are necessary, but not sufficient, for women-centered legislation to be enacted. Her study places a renewed emphasis on the

institutional supports that are available to women, inside and outside parliament, as an essential component in the substantive representation of women. She warns, however, that the cross-party co-operation evident in the reproductive rights case is fragile and prone to disintegration in the face of the adversarial logic of parliamentary politics. Thus, Sawyer raises an important consideration for research of this kind: how sustainable are gender-focused institutions in facilitating women-sensitive policy change.

An important debate within comparative politics in recent decades involves whether Islam and democracy are compatible. In 'Where Does Religion Meet Democracy? A Comparative Analysis of Attitudes in Europe,' Natalia Vlas and Sergiu Gherghina analyze data from the European Values Survey on the relationship between religious beliefs and attitudes toward democracy and authoritarianism. Their findings are quite unequivocal and should help advance our understanding of an issue of burning theoretical and political importance.

This issue concludes with a study of the correlates of political participation by Amal Tawfik, Pascal Sciarini, and Eugène Horber. 'Putting Voter Turnout in a Longitudinal and Contextual Perspective: an Analysis of Actual Participation Data' analyzes an unusually rich source of voting data to illuminate what influences turnout. Voting registers in the canton of Geneva, Switzerland, document not only who votes but voters' social characteristics. Tawfik, Sciarini, and Horber are thus able to assess the extent of gender and age-related variations in voting rates, as well as the impact of varying forms of ballot procedures.

Mark Kesselman