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This review issue is shorter than usual because having published many fine articles in previous issues in 2012, we were forced to publish a shorter review issue to respect our annual page ceiling. But although the present issue includes four – instead of the typical five – review articles, each one provides an erudite discussion of a major research strand in political science. The contribution of Jörn Fischer, Keith Dowding and Patrick Dumont in ‘The Duration and Durability of Cabinet Ministers’ reviews the work undertaken to date in research on cabinet ministers, their profiles and careers. They make the important distinction between cabinet stability and ministerial durability, and observe that while the reasons for ministerial exits from cabinet are often studied, the reasons for their survival from one cabinet to the next are not subject to the same attention. They discuss the different ways in which ministerial office-holding is measured as a central issue and then turn their attention to the institutional and political characteristics of the cabinet-minister environment. Next, they attend to personal characteristics before focusing on the role of political events in determining ministerial longevity. They conclude by identifying a number of general institutional and individual principles that can be applied in the study of ministerial duration, and indicate the directions for future research in this highly relevant field.

In ‘Ethnofederalism, Separatism, and Conflict: What Have We Learned From the Soviet and Yugoslav Experiences?’ Arman Grigoryan reviews scholarship focused on how best to bring order and peace to divided societies. From a position generally supportive of consociational/ethnofederal institutional arrangements, he investigates the claims of anti-ethnofederal scholars. Essentially, he supports Lijphart’s view that ethnic power-sharing arrangements lead to a reduction in the likelihood of violent conflict re-emerging. He examines the widely-held contrary position that ethnofederal arrangements contribute to a hardening of identities and encourage separatism and conflict. In viewing how scholars have interpreted the breakup of the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia, he offers a critique of the anti-ethnofederalists’ claims, while recognising the merits of their arguments. He develops the argument that ethnofederalist arrangements are often not the cause of centrifugal ethnonationalist pressures as much as they are a negotiated compromise resulting from pre-existing ethnonationalism. He concludes that the meaningful research question to be asked is ‘What makes ethnofederal bargains stable or unstable?’ He also questions whether separatism is necessarily undesirable and the presumption that violence is inevitable in the pursuit of secession. These are challenging issues that consociationalists and their opponents must address in defending their case that ethnofederalism has promoted the break-up of states.

‘Try again. Fail again. Fail better’. This quotable insight from Samuel Beckett into how learning takes place could be a sub-title for Michael Howlett’s article ‘The Lessons of Failure: Learning and Blame Avoidance in Public Policy-Making’. Howlett seeks to construct a set of principles that can be applied to specific policy problems and that will enhance the chances of policy success. He distinguishes between policy failures rooted in one of three sources: the political, programme and

process activities of governments. He discusses the policy learning literature in depth and points to the fact that policy success is a rare instance of success across all three dimensions. In reality, most policies are complex mixes of success and failure at different stages of the policy cycle. This is partly why success or failure is difficult to quantify and often a matter of interpretation or debate, and why politicians and administrators are highly risk-sensitive. Yet, policy failure is an important subject of policy learning among practitioners. Howlett argues that knowing the *type* of failure involved allows for better identification of the causes of failure and their redress. He suggests that the main focus of policy analysis has concentrated on programme failures, and that insufficient attention has been given to understanding political and process-type failures. Indeed, Howlett concludes that developing increasingly sophisticated technical solutions to policy problems, as a programme analysis would imply, only increases the risk of continued policy failure. His exhortation to policy scholars is to encourage 'deep' learning that comes from analysing political and process failures, so that policy-makers can fail better, if not succeed more.

The final review essay turns the spotlight on the concept of radicalism, and how elite definitions of what constitutes 'good' and 'bad' radicalism have led to conceptual dissonance and ambiguity in practical and analytical contexts. In 'The Rhetoric and Reality of Violent Radicalisation and Political Discourse', Jonathan Githens-Mazer discusses the political meaning invested in the term 'radical' and its recent innovation 'radicalisation'. He argues that the current use of 'radical' and 'radicalisation' is premised on an emotional response to 9/11 and the London and Madrid bombings, and that they are used as descriptive terms to explain why Muslims attacked the West in the name of their religion. Surveying the literature, he finds three broad category definitions of radicalisation – that of process (e.g., the steps one takes to become a terrorist), causation (e.g., what causes a person to become radicalised) and a negative definition (e.g., 'not' terrorism, 'not' violence). He argues that social science research suffers from the popular emphasis on the terrorism/security threat nexus, and that for objective research to take place on the phenomenon there must be a re-conceptualisation of the term. Githens-Mazer points to the direction future research should take: first, by examining implicit assumptions that link radicalisation, violence and identity; second, by adopting a comparative methodology and careful case selection; third, by adopting a reflexive approach on how radicalisation research contributes to or counters the construction of risk and threat. Social scientists, he argues, have an obligation to research radicalisation in a properly scholarly manner, independent of social or political influences.

IPSR is constantly evolving to meet the demands of our global authors, readers, and political science scholarship. As editors we regularly consider how the journal can best adapt to changing needs and times, and discuss these matters with our Sage commissioning editor, David Mainwaring. We are keen to give space to the excellent research that comes to us, and have decided to free up extra pages in each issue from January 2013 onwards by dropping the 'In This Issue' essay. This decision marks the end of a long-standing item in the journal, but after careful consideration we think it will give us those few precious extra pages to accommodate more articles per volume. So, to our loyal readers of 'In this Issue' essays, we bid you adieu, thank you for your readership, and hope that you agree with our choice to eliminate introductory essays in order to provide space for additional articles. Beginning with the January issue, as previously announced, Marian Sawyer will replace Yvonne Galligan as Senior Editor of *IPSR*, along with Mark Kesselman. We welcome Marian and look forward to her contribution to maintaining and strengthening *IPSR*'s tradition of scholarly excellence.

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