
Editorial

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For the last two issues of volume seven of *French Politics*, we are charting new waters, a special double issue. In the pages that follow, the reader will find two research articles – one on the role of deputies in the National Assembly and another on Franco-Indian relations – as well as two full-length symposia – one on Stanley Hoffmann’s contributions to the study of France, the European Union (EU) and International Relations and a second on Social Exclusion and Collective Action in Contemporary France. There is also a full-length Data, Measures and Methods article on the historical and political sociology of the EU, as well as a review essay that takes a long-term perspective on the issue of anti-Americanism in France. Clearly, there is much to digest at both an empirical and a theoretical level.

Perhaps the unifying thread to this joint issue – and, indeed, to the project that we have undertaken at *French Politics* as a whole – may be found in the remarks by Professor Hoffmann himself. Rather than dwell on his own career, he deftly dissects the state of theory in International Relations, which he denounces as ‘sad’. Why? He cites several causes – methodological determinism, an over-reliance on approaches derived from economics and an abandonment of the moral foundations of the discipline itself. Yet, nowhere is he more clear about his prescription for the empirical study of politics than when he says, ‘simplicity is not everything!’. Sometimes reality, he reminds us, defies easy theories – parsimony (desirable!) does not equate with *mere* simplicity. Instead, he urges the student of politics to be attuned to the complexity of interrelationships, actors and processes that define modern politics.

But still it is the task of the political analyst to try and make some sense of an often chaotic and disorderly world, and to attempt to derive meaning from fact. These are the hallmarks in the contributions to the Royall and Chabanet symposium, which shares the same preoccupation with not passing over empirical complexity to engage in empty theorizing. The symposium, read as a whole, poses an important challenge to those who work in political science; can we truly speak of a ‘paradigm’ that captures social action in contemporary Europe? And to read these essays alongside Professor Georgakakis fine contribution to the Data, Measures and Methods section is to be reminded that we are still far away from one unifying methodological approach – but maybe



we are the better for it. Methodological diversity does not necessarily imply either laxity or the dialogue of the deaf; on the other hand, it may provide a richness to the contemporary world of the social sciences.

If this is indeed true, then what shall be our unifying principles? If we are not bound as political scientists by a common methodology, if we share diverse and frequently uncertain epistemological roots, then where is our *lingua franca*? The strong implication of Professor Hoffmann's comments is that an ahistorical, deterministic political science is one that submits to ideological manipulation and which – crucially – has no moral foundation. All great political questions, he suggests, begin and end in normative theory. *French Politics* is committed to publishing the highest quality work in our discipline that illuminates the practice of politics in France and elsewhere. We are dearly attached to empiricism and methodological rigour, and we firmly plead for a science of politics. Yet, we are proud to publish Stanley Hoffmann's trenchant and timely remarks, along with the symposium that generated his response, and we share his deep and abiding attachment to a political science of worth.

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