

THE VIEW FROM SOUTH LAWN

The tenor of political discourse in this year's U.S. electoral campaigns accentuates the extent to which sound bites, slogans, and punditry have subordinated serious academic exercise in the public space. Complex and pressing issues, rife with methodological challenges that necessitate qualified nuance, are conveyed to the electorate with feigned simplicity that must be reproached. We can take solace, however, in the knowledge that robust and innovative research in the social sciences is being continually conducted by thousands of scholars across the globe and that the results of their labor will provide further insight into finding solutions for the challenges faced by contemporary societies. The task at hand is to extend these findings beyond the insulated confines of academic campuses and professional journals in such a manner that they may be incorporated into more popularly accessible sources of information without losing their profundity. This endeavor is precisely the mission of the *Journal of Politics & Society* which, in its twenty-fourth year of publication by The Helvidius Group at Columbia University, continues to integrate the foremost undergraduate scholarship into broader academic dialogues while also propagating these analyses to the broadest possible audience.

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This edition of the *Journal of Politics & Society* begins with a guest essay on the European debt crisis by investor and philanthropist George Soros. Soros contends that the bifurcation of the Eurozone into creditor and debtor nations will force Germany to either lead in the creation of a banking union with a debt reduction fund, euro-denominated debt, and a focus on high nominal economic growth rates or leave the euro altogether.

Next, in the Tomassi Essay, Christopher Haugh analyzes the reasoning behind U.S. Cold War policy toward Cuba, finding that successive administrations concerned themselves deeply with the effects of policy decisions on public image. Fearing the label of

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being soft on communism, approaches promoting long-term normalization were sacrificed in favor of the projection of symbolic strength. Transitioning toward contemporary U.S. politics, Sarah Weiner explores the evolving frames used to discuss ethanol policy, maintaining that emerging issues including global food prices, international trade regimes, and the budget deficit problematized the formerly consensus view that ethanol subsidies had a positive impact when analyzed through the older frames of the environment, agriculture, and energy security. Evan Goldstein addresses the prominent political issue of health care access and delivery with a quantitative approach exploring how resources are utilized by local populations. Through a game-theoretic model of patient interaction, Goldstein finds that the flow of information from health care providers generated a socially suboptimal level of care, revealing an over-reliance on certain resources and a consequent underuse of others.

The second set of papers in this edition focus their attention on issues in contemporary Latin America, with each approaching a unique aspect of society with an intense attention to regional and national particularities. Matt Getz addresses the region's historic susceptibility to sudden economic downturns, credit crises, and sociopolitical inconsistencies by examining the countercyclical fiscal policies enacted by Chile, Peru, Colombia, Argentina, Mexico, Brazil, and Venezuela during the economic expansion from 2002–2008 and how these policies affected the outcomes of each country during the recent global economic recession. Next, Guilhem de Roquefeuil explores the evolution of public policy regarding indigenous populations across the continent and how constitutional recognition of indigenous rights has affected the practical protection and enforcement of these protections. Finally, Jonathan Lemus appraises the lack of private sector involvement in Guatemalan political parties, concluding that considerable influence over government policy and the absence of a strong representative political party system with an influential leftist organization contributed to the severance of this linkage.

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As our second fall edition goes to press, it is clear that the determined efforts of The Helvidius Group's members have ensured our successful establishment as a semi-annual publication. Working with this Editorial Board has been among the most rewarding enterprises of my undergraduate career and their professionalism and dedication is patent throughout this edition. Although the completion of this volume marks the closing of my tenure as Editor in Chief, I am certain that the *Journal* will continue to provide innovative perspectives into the myriad of dilemmas and challenges faced by contemporary societies.

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Editor in Chief

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