

Editorial Note

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This 58th volume of *Politikon: The IAPSS Journal of Political Science* brings together a diverse collection of articles examining critical questions in contemporary political science, with particular focus on international law, human rights, democratic participation, and gender politics across different regional contexts.

The volume opens with Lala Jafarova's analysis of the challenges and opportunities in global health cooperation. Drawing on policy analysis and theoretical frameworks from both political science and bioethics, Jafarova demonstrates how the proposed pandemic treaty navigates competing demands of national sovereignty and global public health. As the world continues to process lessons from the COVID-19 pandemic, Jafarova's work reminds us about the complex challenges of building effective global governance. Her article highlights that the pandemic exposed critical gaps in international cooperation while also creating opportunities for reimagining global cooperation.

Judy El Baba's article offers historical analysis of Lebanon's sectarian politics, tracing how the French Mandate's colonial legacies continue to shape contemporary governance structures and political representation. Through examination of religious biases in colonial administration and the 1943 National Pact, El Baba shows how institutionalized sectarianism impacts modern Lebanese politics through religious quotas, patronage networks, and fragmented national identity.

Catalina Catana and Simen Ekeberg's timely article analyzes the tensions between national sovereignty and universal human rights through the lens of the ongoing Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Their decolonial critique of international law reveals how the nation-state system and human rights framework remain embedded in colonial power structures, limiting their effectiveness in protecting vulnerable populations. The authors make a compelling case for reimagining these institutions beyond their colonial origins.

Sung Jun Han's research note contributes to debates about identity and democracy. Han argues that merely making identities more flexible is insufficient for addressing contemporary challenges to democratic practice. Instead, Han proposes that fostering

multiple, distinct social identities that can coexist and interact within individuals and communities may better serve democratic ends.

Stephanie Mae Pedron's essay advocates for expanding voting rights to non-citizens in the United States. Drawing on historical analysis of immigrant suffrage and contemporary democratic theory, Pedron challenges us to rethink traditional connections between citizenship and political participation. She argues that extending voting rights, particularly at the local level, would enhance democratic representation while facilitating immigrant integration into American society.

The issue includes two thoughtful book reviews examining feminist movements and gender politics. Maria Tarasenko's review of Leta Hong Fincher's *Betraying Big Brother* (2018) analyzes feminist activism and state repression in China, while Georgy Slavin-Rudakov's review of Julie Cassiday's *Russian Style* (2023) explores the performance of gender and power under Putin's regime. Both reviews highlight the complex intersections of gender, politics, and authoritarian control.

The articles in this volume, while diverse in their geographical focus and methodological approaches, converge around important questions about how political systems respond to demands for inclusion and representation. Their intersecting analyses show how historical structures—state sovereignty claims, colonial legacies, sectarian institutions, international and citizenship laws—shape current political possibilities while also suggesting pathways for contestation and transformation.

Critical Intersections

Sovereignty and Universal Rights

Jafarova's analysis of the pandemic treaty negotiations highlights how states resist ceding control over public health decisions despite clear needs for global cooperation. This sovereignty-versus-universality dynamic is even more stark in Catana and Ekeberg's examination of the Gaza conflict, where they argue that the nation-state system's colonial foundations limit the effectiveness of international human rights frameworks. El Baba's study of Lebanon similarly reveals how national sovereignty claims can entrench sectarian divisions that undermine equal rights and representation.

Historical Legacies and Institutional Structures

El Baba demonstrates how French colonial administration created enduring patterns of sectarian politics in Lebanon, while Catana and Ekeberg trace how colonial power relations continue to influence international law. Even in established democracies, as

Pedron's analysis of US voting rights shows, historical restrictions on political participation create institutional barriers that persist long after formal exclusions end. These works collectively highlight the importance of understanding how past structures constrain present political arrangements.

Identity Politics and Democratic Practice

Questions of identity and its relationship to political participation run throughout the volume. Han's theoretical work on identity plurality provides a framework for understanding these dynamics, while El Baba's examination of sectarian identity in Lebanon shows their practical implications. Further, Pedron's argument for expanding voting rights challenges traditional connections between national identity and political participation, encouraging us to reimagine the boundaries of democratic inclusion. The book reviews examining feminist resistance in China and gender performance as political contestation in Russia further explore how authoritarian states manipulate identity categories to maintain control while simultaneously creating opportunities for resistance. Together, these pieces reveal both the power of identity politics to challenge existing structures and its potential capture by state forces.

These thematic intersections not only demonstrate the complexity of contemporary political challenges—whether negotiating between national sovereignty and global imperatives, confronting colonial legacies in modern institutions, or balancing identity politics with democratic practices—but also highlight the value of diverse analytical and interdisciplinary approaches in analyzing politics. As the contributions in this volume suggest, addressing these challenges requires both careful attention to historical context and openness to reimagining political possibilities.

Academic Publishing and Global Knowledge Production

In our Conversations section, Abel Polese's reflective piece offers a pragmatic examination of inequalities in academic publishing while challenging oversimplified narratives about discrimination and dissects the multiple factors that influence manuscript acceptance. This contribution is particularly valuable for its emphasis on agency and professional development. While acknowledging structural barriers, Polese argues that scholars can take specific steps to enhance their work's chances of publication. This contribution continues the dialogue initiated in our previous volume by Velomahanina Razakamaharavo (Politikon 55, 2023) on the challenges and opportunities for scholars from the Global South in academic publishing.

Our journal strives to be not merely a venue for publication but a forum for ongoing dialogue about academic knowledge production, and we invite readers to consider and respond to several key questions that emerge from Polese's and Razakamaharavo's contributions. How do different academic traditions approach research methodology and presentation? How does linguistic diversity enhance or challenge scholarly discussions? What role can mentorship and collaboration play in democratizing academic publishing? What structural changes in academic publishing would most benefit emerging scholars?

We welcome responses to Polese's and Razakamaharavo's contributions in future issues and are particularly interested in featuring diverse perspectives on academic publishing challenges and solutions. Our goal is to foster meaningful and productive dialogue between established and emerging scholars while building networks of support for authors from underrepresented backgrounds. Through this ongoing conversation, we hope to contribute to the development of more inclusive scholarly practices that address the challenges identified by both Razakamaharavo and Polese while maintaining high quality standards of academic publications.