

Editorial Note

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This issue of *Politikon: The LAPSS 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.

Critical Intersections

The issue 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 also 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 repressions in China, while Georgy Slavin-Rudakov's review of Julie Cassiday's *Russian Style* (2023) explores the performance of gender and power under Vladimir Putin's regime. Both reviews highlight the complex intersections of gender, politics, and authoritarian control.

Collectively, these articles, while diverse in their geographical focus and methodological approaches, converge around the key questions about how political systems respond to demands for inclusion and representation. Jafarova, Catana and Ekeberg, and El Baba each reveal how sovereignty claims—whether in global health governance, international law, or national politics—shape the distribution of rights, responsibilities, and political power. At the same time, historical structures and colonial arrangements continue to influence institutions, from Lebanon's confessional system to the limitations of international legal regimes. Finally, identity—whether understood as sectarian affiliation, gendered performance, or multiple overlapping identities—emerges as both a constraint and a resource for democratic governance. 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.

Academic Publishing and Global Knowledge Production

In our *Conversations* section, Abel Polese—the author of a brilliant career guide for PhD students and emerging scholars *The SCOPUS Diaries and the (il)logics of Academic Survival*

(2019)—offers a pragmatic examination of inequalities in academic publishing while challenging oversimplified narratives about discrimination. He dissects the multiple factors that influence manuscript acceptance and provides practical, experience-based advice for students and early career scholars from the Global South. 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 (2023) on the challenges and opportunities for scholars from the Global South in academic publishing.

These discussions resonate strongly with the broader literature on global academic inequalities. A recent study on Global South scholars publishing in Global North journals, for example, documents the practical, academic, and epistemic tensions faced by scholars who must adapt (“shapeshift”) to Northern norms while remaining grounded in their local contexts (Naidu et al 2024). The participants of this study describe moments where their work is dismissed as irrelevant, where rejections are opaque or difficult to interpret, and where success requires balancing local institutional pressures with the demands of an international publishing ecosystem dominated by Global North epistemology. These tensions are further illuminated by Klaus Beiter's argument (2023) that global copyright regimes—deeply shaped by commercial publishers and Global North policy priorities—restrict access to scholarly knowledge and undermine the “right to science,” especially in the Global South. Beiter shows how high subscription fees, restrictive licensing practices, and technological protection measures impede both research and teaching, creating structural disadvantages that cannot be overcome merely through individual effort. Similarly, Tibelius Amutuhaire's critique (2022) of the “publish or perish” paradigm underscores how Western institutional expectations, when transplanted to the universities of the Global South, reproduce academic inequalities rather than alleviate them. He calls for contextually grounded models of knowledge production that recognize diverse forms of academic labor, including teaching, community engagement, and applied research.

These findings complicate overly optimistic narratives about meritocracy: even when scholars follow all the advice offered by mentors or editorial guidelines, they still confront systemic asymmetries in recognition, legitimacy, and visibility. For emerging scholars, practical strategies outlined by Polese, including co-authoring with international colleagues, seeking robust methodological training, and engaging with global debates may open

important opportunities. Yet these efforts must occur alongside collective projects to transform the structural conditions that shape global knowledge production.

Against this background, 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 does linguistic diversity enhance or complicate scholarly exchange? What role can mentorship and cross-regional collaboration play in democratizing academic publishing? How can journals, publishers, and universities reform their practices to create more equitable pathways for emerging scholars? And how might shifts in copyright policy, publication incentives, and editorial norms contribute to a more inclusive global knowledge ecosystem?

Our goal is to foster constructive dialogue between established and emerging scholars while building networks of support that reflect the diversity of global academia. *Politikon* occupies a distinct and necessary niche by providing a scholarly platform dedicated to early-career voices, offering high editorial standards alongside structured support such as free copy-editing and developmental feedback, and actively promoting contributions from underrepresented groups, diverse backgrounds, and scholars from the Global South. By offering a venue for innovative, interdisciplinary, and critical perspectives, we expand the boundaries of political science and help emerging researchers enter global debates on more equitable terms.

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