

SUMMARIES

Democratic Globalization: Democratic Transitions and Consolidation at the Dawning of the XXI Century

by Davide Grassi

This article evaluates the trends of democratization over the last ten years. In particular, it focuses on the new transitions to democracy taking place in Central-eastern Europe and sub-Saharan Africa, the two regions where this political process has lately been more pervasive. The basic question The author tries to answer is whether the conditions that favored the democratic wave originating in Portugal in the mid-seventies are still able to explain the political transformations that followed the breakdown of the Berlin wall. For many the implosion of Communism makes any such comparisons impossible. After summarizing some crucial variables suggested by the literature to explain democratic transitions and consolidation, The author tests this hypothesis in both Central-eastern Europe and sub-Saharan Africa. Initial findings show that in many cases the variables that favored democratic transitions before 1989 operate in similar ways thereafter. A few differences aside, in the most recent cases a number of basic economic, institutional and cultural conditions continue, as they did earlier, to favor or frustrate democratization.

International Relations in the Land of *the Prince*

by Sonia Lucarelli e Roberto Menotti

Is IR still «an American discipline»? We share the view that *there is* such a thing as IR theorising beyond the Channel, but that Continental IR are still little known and tend to suffer from undeniable weaknesses. This article wants to contribute to the «Continental IR» debate by investigating IR theory in one of the islands of the Continental IR archipelago, most successful in keeping secret its vices and

virtues: Italy. Here theoretical IR has proven to be unable to fully exploit post-Cold war opportunities to establish itself as a discipline with higher visibility. Italian theoretical IR tend to produce few efforts at «theory-building» and some recent theoretical developments never reached the Peninsula, furthermore Italian IR suffer from a certain detachment from broader IR trends both in terms of «import» and – far more – in terms of «export» of literature. We suggest that in order to understand the Italian situation it is necessary to develop an account that goes beyond the traditional purely «external» explanation of IR developments in a given community, and also draws on the cultural-institutional context, that is, on the organizational characteristics of the research environment, the habits of interaction among national professionals and between them and the external market, the political culture of the country.

Tools for Political Science: A Critical Review of Eleven Dictionaries

by Annarita Criscitiello

Political Science, because of its many subdisciplines and multiple approaches, strongly needs a specific vocabulary. This article compares eleven dictionaries – in three languages and four different political cultures – to offer a critical overview of the making of a political dictionary. In the first part of the article the author reviews the editorial and methodological features (the number of editors and/or contributors, the average length of the entries, the method of explanation of the entries, the system of *cross-references*) of the dictionaries chosen. The second part tries to give an account of the (eleven) different typologies of political concepts provided by the editors. The third part of the article is a short review of the entry «political science».

A dictionary is more interesting when each single entry goes beyond a simple report of definitions, taking the aim – as Sartori says – of *reconstructing a concept* but also *forming a concept*. New and original classifications and stronger and stimulating linking patterns among concepts are indispensable to a professional political vocabulary as well as to the theory-making. In the last 15 years some steps have been taken – also by these eleven dictionaries – but much work remains to be done.

Political Forecasting: Epistemological Notes

by Mauro Fotia

Political scientists show a very limited confidence in attempts at forecasting. To all hypotheses aiming at the prediction of the future they much prefer statistical projections that are satisfied to reach the smallest possible uncertainty or the realistically highest degree of probability. Among the approaches implying these attitudes one may single out those connected with the institutional as well as the systemic analyses of politics. In no other political science approach but the systemic, induction always ends with a probabilistic conclusion. Therefore, the cognitive outcomes of every forecasting activity present rather different degrees of probability. On its part, the institutional approach indicates that all forecasting inquiries concerning the processes of construction of political institutions appear very complicated. All the changes represented by the weakening of parliaments, the strengthening of the executives, party government and the personalization of leadership are filtered through phenomena of inertia and routine resistances. Hence, when aiming at acquiring knowledge that may identify objective causal relationships, any forecasting effort encounters many a difficulty. The pursuit of this kind of knowledge is then obliged to take into account several and most diversified variables as well as their covariation. The findings are often quite poor. Nonetheless, this article suggests that the risk to make mistakes and to reach often disappointing outcomes should not deter the scholars from trying to engage in a sustained forecasting effort. After all, the findings will still be susceptible to revisions and corrections.

Citizens' Political Choices: Ambivalence, Reason and Affect

by Mauro Barisione

This article briefly examines two recent works (ed. Kuklinski 2001, Marcus, Neuman and MacKuen 2000) which raise some of the major current problems and hypotheses relating to political psychology, cognitive sciences and public opinion research. In particular, attention is paid to the controversy opposing the «combinatorial» perspective of Paul Sniderman *et al.* to the «constructionist» approach of John Zaller on opinion formation and change. We argue that Zaller's accent on situational frames and Sniderman's emphasis on the underlying political dispositions are much more complementary than mutually exclusive. Therefore, it seems difficult to deny *in toto* the plausibility of the «ambivalence» hypothesis, especially with regard to specific low-involvement segments of citizens and to various new non-obtrusive, not yet crystallized political issues.