

The Best of Political Studies

This virtual issue of *Political Studies* contains a very special set of articles, compiled in honour of the 60th Anniversary of the UK Political Studies Association and showcasing some of the ‘best’ articles published since the launch of *Political Studies* in 1953. The process for compiling this issue has covered many stages, beginning in the summer of 2009 when the Editorial Board asked as many (former) Chairs of the PSA as possible to select the articles that they personally considered to be the most significant from the *Political Studies* archive. This initial selection produced a list of 88 individual articles. The list was then sorted by decade and an email survey was conducted with all current PSA members to invite them to vote for the best articles in each decade. Three email invitations were sent and in total we received 337 sets of votes. Once the results were in it soon became clear that in each of the six decades there were two articles that clearly ranked above the others. The Editorial Board therefore took the decision to make the issue a compendium of the twelve ‘Top Voted’ articles between 1953 and 2010, and these are the articles which you are now able to access as part of this virtual issue.

There was some disgruntlement from a leading Professor that this process was fatuous and to a degree he was right. Any attempt to identify the best articles in a journal such as *Political Studies* is fraught with problems owing to the subjectivities of those involved in the selection and the great variety of articles in the journal. There is no way that like is compared with like and when that process is stretched over many decades the comparisons have even less validity. Such a process is bound to leave out high quality articles and to be in many ways arbitrary. Nevertheless, we think that this process was worthwhile and that is for one very good reason. We now have in the *Political Studies* archive a collection of the best in Political Science produced by scholars from all over the world. If the identification of the ‘best’ does anything, it reminds us of the history of political science that is available in the *Political Studies* archive. When science is seen to move rapidly and citation indices are based on two years of citations it is useful to remember that we have a considerable body of research of the quality and richness which already exists. There is a tendency in a world of pressure continually to publish and to produce new and innovative work. However, sometimes before starting on new research we could learn much by looking at what has already been done.

The articles in this virtual issue then are a representation both of what political science has produced and also of how it has developed. Of course, unlike many other areas of analysis, political science not only changes with conceptual and methodological developments but also because our subject matter changes. In the 1950s, politics was created in the world of the Cold War, whilst by the 21st century the focus is on globalisation and governance. Yet despite these very significant changes in the issues of politics, it is also interesting to see the themes that reoccur across the decades. Two in particular stand out: a focus on democracy, and the relationship between the state and society. Hence there is much of relevance in our archives and the articles in this virtual issue are a reminder of the breadth and depth of what is available.

Martin Smith and Rene Bailey

| Top-voted articles by decade | Decade | Volume | Issue |
|---|--------|--------|-------|
| What Is Socialism? I by G. D. H. Cole | 1950s | 1 | 1 |
| The Anonymous Empire by S. E. Finer | 1950s | 6 | 1 |
| The New Democracy by Graeme Duncan And Steven Lukes | 1960s | 11 | 2 |
| Parties, Factions and Tendencies In Britain by Richard Rose | 1960s | 12 | 1 |
| Order vs Justice In International Society by Hedley Bull | 1970s | 19 | 3 |
| Overload: Problems of Governing In The 1970s by Anthony King | 1970s | 23 | 2-3 |
| The Discipline Of The New Democracy: Mrs Thatcher's Domestic Statecraft by Jim Bulpitt | 1980s | 34 | 1 |
| Re-Reading Political Theory From A Woman's Perspective by Diana Coole | 1980s | 34 | 1 |
| Political Science And The Three New Institutionalisms by Peter A Hall And Rosemary C R Taylor | 1990s | 44 | 5 |
| The New Governance: Governing Without Government by R. A. W. Rhodes | 1990s | 44 | 4 |
| Government, Interest Groups And Policy Change by Jeremy Richardson | 2000s | 48 | 5 |
| Political Studies As Narrative And Science 1880-2000 by Mark Bevir | 2000s | 54 | 3 |