The Academy of Political Science

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between individuals will necessarily result when government fulfills what they regarded as its proper duties, the first of which, according to Madison, is to protect the "different and unequal faculties" that lead to "the possession of different degrees and kinds of property" (*The Federalist, No. 10*). Madison opposed the kind of micromanagerial regulation proposed by Schwarz, and wrote that "commercial shackles are generally unjust, oppressive and impolitic" and that "industry and labour [ought to be] left to take their own course" (Speech to House of Representatives on Import Duties, 1789). This is also what Jefferson meant when he said that "a wise and frugal Government . . . shall restrain men from injuring one another, shall leave them otherwise free to regulate their own pursuits of industry and improvement, and shall not take from the mouth of labor the bread it has earned." This, Jefferson believed, "is the sum of good government" (First Inaugural).

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Tides of Consent: How Public Opinion Shapes American Politics *by James A. Stimson. New York, Cambridge University Press, 2004. 206 pp. Cloth, $55.00; paper, $16.99.*

Public opinion counts. It is the "drive wheel" of American politics. But what counts most is public opinion *change.* When opinion changes, it signals that something matters. This is the message of much of James A. Stimson's earlier work, and *Tides of Consent* advances his thesis further, this time for a general audience who wants to understand more about how opinion dynamics drive politics. But scholars and their students will find much to appreciate as well in this clearly written and engaging book, filled with interesting time series data and colorful examples about politicians and campaigns we all remember.

How does public opinion move over time? What moves it? Why does it move? What explains the movement? Stimson attacks these questions systematically. As in his earlier analyses, he reports that overall opinion on New Deal welfare state issues (education, health care, cities, the environment, race, welfare, and taxes) moves *opposite* to the direction of the party of the president. When Republicans are in charge, opinion grows more liberal; when Democrats are in charge, opinion grows more conservative. This is because parties define the liberal and conservative poles of politics in the United States, and thus Americans have to choose in elections between a party of the right and a party of the left. But some are not satisfied with what they get and so respond by soon expressing a view contrary to whatever direction is taken. Critics may disparage this as gross overgeneralization, but Stimson describes these long-term flows of opinion as "the backdrop of American politics" (p. 95), not what literally dictates exact enacted legislation at any one time.

He next examines opinion movement over the course of political campaigns. Whether campaigns matter relates, in part, to whether they have to do with reelection landslides of incumbents who were popular in the year preceding the election, or with more closely contested elections. The former are characterized by relative constancy over the election year, the latter by systematic movement. Clearly, opinion movements point to the fact that campaigns matter. But what exactly causes opinion movement? Of the repeatable phenomena that can be observed—nominating conventions and candidate debates—it is nominating conventions that affect winning and losing. They energize their supporters, unite the factions within parties, and provide opportunities for intense political learning. The presidential debates have little impact.

The third set of public opinion movements that Stimson examines is support for senators, Congress, and governors between elections. Using trends from 1981 to 2000, he finds that the absolute levels of support vary but that the underlying patterns rise and fall similarly. The underlying dimension is economic confidence. Thus, it appears that the public makes their decisions based on how well they think things are going in the country economically.

The final question is who accounts for most of the opinion changes. Stimson's answer is that the citizens who produce opinion changes are a group he calls "scorekeepers." It is not "the passionate" or "the uninvolved" who change much in their views about issues and about which party should govern. Instead, it is these scorekeepers—nonideological, dispassionate pragmatists who see politics as based on making a decision about who can do a better job, not on ideology. A partial answer to Stimson's subhead, *How Public Opinion Shapes American Politics*, is that, despite considerable individual ignorance in, and inattention from, "the uninvolved" and considerable rigidity from "the passionate," a substratum of Americans are attentive to outcomes and "sit on the sidelines as judges" (p. 168) caring about performance. Without intense partisanship and ideology, they are willing to change their minds.

Stimson believes that the most important thing in American politics is public opinion but says we have only "scratched the surface" in understanding opinion movement (p. xvi). His work has done much more than scratch the surface, and in *Tides of Consent*, he accomplishes his goal of making his research accessible to a broader audience than he has reached before.

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The New Transnational Activism *by Sidney Tarrow. New York, Cambridge University Press, 2005. 280 pp. Cloth, $55.00; paper, $19.99.*

In recent years, there has been an explosion of scholarly literature on social protest. Why? Probably, like Hegel's owl of Minerva, it is a response to the surge of protest that has occurred since the 1960s, notably, the civil rights, student, and antiwar movements in the United States, the May 1968 movement in France, the