collapse," mainly due to successful diversification, shortening supply chains, and other adjustments to "reduce overreliance on China to the extent possible" (p. 245). That GSC are at once "more central and less vulnerable" in our hyperglobalized world is also suggested by the volume's chapters that show East Asia's GSC infrastructure and regional economic agreements weathering geopolitical tensions up to 2020–21. This has allowed East Asia to position itself "for increased GSC regionalization while remaining highly dependent on extra-regional trade in final goods" (p. 247). Thus, a significant part of the answer to questions about the interdependence-peace connection might be in actors' ability to create subsystemic buffers that reduce vulnerability—in this case, at a regional level.

The volume's contributions to IR might have been amplified in two ways. First, where the empirical evidence allows, it would have been useful to pay specific attention to the contagion effects of short- or medium-term obstacles created by various shocks to GSC since 2018. In particular, the US-China trade war and the COVID-19 pandemic could conceivably have generated strong contagion effects in terms of logrolling coalitions of the inward-looking, especially at the domestic level both in China and the United States. For example, Phoebe Moon's chapter "Why Escalate? Cognitive Theory and Global Supply Chains in Northeast Asia" applies prospect theory to understand why a potential domain of loss can cause a seemingly weaker interdependent party to escalate geopolitical conflict. Her analysis centers on South Korea, and it would have been interesting to see if this dynamic also applies between the United States and China, and between China and Japan.

Second, this volume is an excellent anchor for further studies of GSC-centric interdependence in and beyond East Asia. Further studies might range beyond the US-China trade war to explore other types of shocks. Further studies of East Asia might also range beyond Northeast Asia—which is the focus of this book—to compare these themes in Southeast Asia, and perhaps South Asia. States and firms in the two subregions are positioned in even more varied ways in GSC and manifest a wider range of combinations of goods and services. Both Southeast Asia and India are mentioned by authors in this volume as alternatives for Northeast Asian economies searching for other off-shoring alternatives. The centrality of GSC and variation in GSC strength are likely to differ compared to Northeast Asia.

This book went to print at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic and the authors were able only to provide preliminary analyses of this important, and possibly defining, shock to the global political economy. Yet, overall, the analysis here provides a valuable baseline and framework for analysing contemporary shocks like the pandemic, Russia's invasion of Ukraine, and future contingencies over Taiwan and other flashpoints in East Asia.

The Political Commissioner: A European Ethnography.

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Frédéric Mérand's book makes an original contribution to the study of EU politics and, in particular, to the study of the cabinets of European Commissioners, for which he presents a unique ethnographic case study, somewhere between the seminal works of George Ross (*Jacques Delors and European Integration*, 1995) and Jean Joana and Andy Smith (*Les Commissaires Européens: Technocrates, Diplomates ou Politiques?*, 2002). Studies on the European Commission are by far the most abundant in the field of European politics. The desire to make the European Commission a body that is "political, very political", as its former president Jean Claude Junker claimed when he took office in 2014, has furthermore generated a considerable array of literature on the politicisation of this organisation. Mérand's ethnography of the life of the cabinet—with which he spent two months a year during its five-year mandate (2014–2019)—of the former Commissioner for Economy and Finance, Pierre Moscovici deals with this issue, but it is an ethnographic study that goes far beyond that.

The book is structured as follows: after an introduction that presents the way in which this book constructs the question of politicisation and the contribution of the ethnographic method, a first chapter presents the main actors of the cabinet and the context of the constraints that weigh on these actors' ability to do political work. The subsequent chapters are devoted to a series of political issues, which Mérand reports on from the point of view of the cabinet and its actions, before concluding. Chapters 2 and 3 deal with the negotiations with Greece when Yanis Varoufakis was Greek Finance Minister and after his departure. Chapter 4 presents a kind of parenthesis on the French Commissioner's links with French politics and the consequences of the departure of F. Hollande and the arrival of E. Macron as head of state. Chapters 5 and 6 deal with the policy of the Stability Pact and the peculiar turn it took after the 5 Star and Liga coalition government came to power in Italy. The reform of the euro zone (Chapter 7) and tax policy, with the two cases of the fight against tax evasion (Chapter 8) and the taxation of Gafas (Chapter 9), complete the overview of the most political issues of the mandate.

All in all, the book represents a dive into the European institutions which will be essential for all those—whether specialist or not (the book avoids jargon)—who seek to better understand the functioning of the EU, especially when they seek to do so at a distance from the political beating heart of Brussels. But this study will also be of

wider interest to the political and social science community, as the EU is presented here as a site for addressing more cross-cutting questions. I discuss three such questions here.

To what extent and in what ways do politicians who are supposed to lead complex bureaucratic groups and navigate intricate diplomatic, technical, and legal interdependencies have the capacity to make their actions political and in what way(s)? And what does the hybrid transnational system of specific regional integration that the EU represents show us? To understand this, Mérand breaks with the most common definitions of the politicisation of the European Commission. Drawing on the work of both Hannah Arendt and Pierre Bourdieu, he starts from the principle that "things are not political in themselves, but that they become so" and defines political work as the search for "the extension of the collective capacity to make choices in a context structured by various legal, economic, diplomatic and technocratic constraints." The book thus shows the important limits of the political work of a European Commissioner and their team. As the head of the cabinet theorises at one point, the art of the European compromise invites actors to navigate between the constraints of the institutions, the Member States and public opinion. Consequently, the margins are very narrow and far from having the capacity to produce radical transformations. The different cases studied, however, show the delicate and intense work that takes place to open up the margins and scope for action. This work is done less in view of public opinion, as such, or the parliament (except on the subject of taxes) and focusses more on mobilising the key players in the negotiations. However, it involves a constant effort at making sense of or rethinking meaning, interpretation, and framing (in informal meetings, lunches) or during semi-public events (the Commission's press room, trips to the capitals of Member States). Doing politics means shifting the lines of the initial balance of power by seeking to exert influence on the categorisation of public action, the meaning of certain instruments, priorities and temporalities.

The ethnographic method, which has already been said to be underused in the study of political decision-making (see R.A.W. Rhodes, Paul 't Hart, and Mirko Noordegraaf, "Being there," in *Observing Government Elites*, 1-17, 2007), proves to be a good method for showing this, and this is the second contribution of the book. The perspective taken in Ross's seminal work on the Delors cabinet, allows us to get as close as possible to practices in Brussels, while distancing ourselves from the overly mechanistic uses of the interpretation models that are more frequently applied in studies in this field. The actors do have preferences, but these are not necessarily the ones that govern. Their reading of the situation is much more fraught and hesitant. Contexts of uncertainty are almost constant. From crises, for which remedies must be

invented from scratch, to the difficulties of long-term strategies, which must pass through so many arenas and translation processes that plans are constantly in disarray; it is impossible to disentangle rational action and socialisation. The struggles of institutions do not resemble clear confrontations but permanent adjustments that are sometimes imperceptible insofar as they are internalised by the actors. At the same time, agency does not stand in opposition to structure(s) and neither does the micro to the macro. From this point of view, Mérand implicitly constructs his observations in the tradition of Niel Fligstein and the uses that political sociology makes of social field theory (see Didier Georgakakis, and Jay Rowell, eds. *The Field of Eurocracy: Mapping EU Actors and Professionals.* Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2013). The interactions described under the microscope do not come from nowhere, but they update the major structures of the field, like the partly different visions of Europe held by insiders and outsiders (those, within the cabinet, pursuing careers in Brussels and those coming from national politics), as well as the tensions between pure economists and politicians (see Didier Georgakakis, and Frédéric Lebaron. "Yanis (Varoufakis), the Minotaur, and the Field of Eurocracy," *Historical Social Research / Historische Sozialforschung* 43[3], 2018 on these aspects). Social anthropologists will no doubt regret that the cultural stereotypes that underpin social dominations in the field are not sufficiently teased out, but they will appreciate that the book highlights the central weight of representations and often misunderstandings (Moscovici, who is seen as very pale pink in France, is seen as a Marxist in Brussels). All this points to the relative closure of the field, which means that citizens remain most often at a distance, as do national or international political specialists who are not socialised into the specificities of the EU playing/social field.

Finally, the book addresses the relationship of politics to the globalised economy. By showing how EU economic policy depends on the art of navigating between the EU institutions (including the ECB) and their rules, coalitions of member states (or third parties, such as the United States in the context of Gafa in particular), and international organisations (there is also a lot of discussion of the IMF and the OECD), it shows how the political promises to transform capitalism after the crisis have led to more modest achievements. External shocks are not enough. Between the mood of the beginning of the Junker Commission's mandate and the end, the urgency of transforming capitalism seems to have been exhausted in the strong inertia of some member states (especially Germany, often mentioned in the book), the incessant back and forth within the Commission and between the institutions in charge, and the necessary compromises with international or economic institutions completely independent of the Commission (from the ECB to the IMF and the OECD). Political pressure, that of the Parliament or of public

opinion, is too weak, or too mediatised by national oppositions, to be a lever. This is not to say that nothing has been done. Of course, the actors have divergent interpretations, the Brussels insiders think that they have redrawn the lines around the conception of the economy, the Parisians—many of whom will return to national politics—are disappointed at not having achieved the turnaround they were hoping for, but everything indicates that the transformations in interpretation and the broadening of margins provided solutions during the crisis represented by COVID-19 and some even more important advances were made at this time. If Mérand's analysis disenchants many naïve perceptions of politics as a capacity to produce massive short-term transformations, it partly reenchants it by showing the efforts made by the actors to maintain equilibrium within these very complex interdependencies and to seek solutions, even when it means that these solutions will be realised later on.

Normative Transformation and the War on Terrorism: The Evolution of Targeted Killing, Torture, and Private Military Contracting. By Simon Frankel Pratt. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022. 215p. $110.00 cloth.

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This is a book about norms, but one that fundamentally revises how we should conceptualize the phenomenon that has been understood under that label. Simon Frankel Pratt's *Normative Transformation and the War on Terrorism* is a major advance in how to approach "norms" as objects of study. Bringing together insights from relational sociology, practice theory, and pragmatist philosophy, the book argues for a shift from understanding a "norm" as a static entity that "causes" action, to thinking about "normative configurations" as a process that inheres in action. Empirically, the book intervenes into debates over the US conduct in the post-9/11 war on terror and the question of whether the use of practices such as torture and assassination mean that we are witnessing the decay or death of established norms.

The book opens with a critique of how international relations (IR) has approached the phenomenon of "norms," and particularly the question of normative change. The first concern raised is that IR theory tends to dichotomize "interest based/strategic" and "normative" or ethical motivations, which has led to a reified and rigid debate in IR between those who advocate for "realist" versus "constructivist" views of the world (p. ix). Yet as Pratt points out, in practice ethical and strategic motivations are often intertwined. The key conceptual innovation of the book is the introduction of the concept of "normative configuration," which conceptualizes ethical/normative forces as residing in practices and relations,

rather than static "values." A key advance here is that this approach aims to develop a more satisfactory way of understanding both how "norms" affect action, and how "norms" may change. Like the traditions of practice theory and relational sociology on which it builds, this approach aims to avoid the pitfalls of understanding "values" as themselves having force upon action, without a clear understanding of the mechanism through which this occurs. Drawing on three substantive case studies, Pratt develops an analysis in which practices are the site where norms inhere, and the institutionalization of practices as the mechanism through which the phenomenon we understand as "norms" takes root. In some ways, the theory of "norms" developed here is closer to sociological theories of institutionalization (and make no mistake, this is a good thing).

While most existing work focuses on the development and imposition of norms, especially norms that restrict state behavior (and which might be understood as positive, or morally "good" by most observers), Pratt's work joins a still relatively small body of recent work that focuses upon the flip side of this process: how such norms "decline" or "decay." However, Pratt argues that we should not necessarily understand change as a process of decay, arguing that, as demonstrated in the three cases he studies, the impact of prohibitive norms continues to shape the use of "prohibited" practices such as torture and assassination even when they proliferate. The key piece of evidence here appears to be the fact that agents continue to engage with these norms even as they seek to transgress them. As Pratt writes, "To propose that 'norm death' has occurred in these cases is therefore to take a side in an interpretive dispute that the relevant actors themselves have not yet settled, because their dispute is over what the relevant norm means, with one 'side' claiming that it continues to exist more or less unchanged" (p. 8). The shifts witnessed in the course of the US war on terror should therefore, he argues, be understood as changes, or evolution, in "norms" rather than their "decay" or "death."

The empirical center of the book focuses on three case studies of normative transformation in the post-9/11 US war on terror: targeted killing, torture, and use of mercenaries/private military contractors. In each of these cases, Pratt applies his analytic method of "de-reification, attribution of agency, and tracing transactions" (p. 50) to trace how the changes occurred. Pratt introduces a three-part mechanism for how norm transformations occur, comprising what he calls convention reorientation, technological revision, and network synthesis. In each of the cases, he argues that actors faced a crisis, and actively reframed previously forbidden practices, making use of new technologies and new networks, change the dominant "normative configuration."

Normative Transformation and the War on Terrorism is a crucial contribution to the study of norms in IR; it should