

practices and the formation of [a] security dilemma” at the point of decolonization (p. 56).

On these foundations, Mohan builds his model of complex rivalry, with a hub and four spokes. Perhaps confusingly, in terms of the earlier denial that Hindu–Muslim tensions were in play at the start of the rivalry, the hub of the rivalry is what he terms the “ethno-territorial” problem of Kashmir (p. 60). The spokes—or “temporal factors”—are a mixture of internal and external factors: the regime type of India and Pakistan, their relative power, great power behavior, and what Mohan calls “rivalry linkage”; namely, other issues in which either India or Pakistan or both have some interest (p. 62).

Mohan uses this hub-and-spokes model to analyze four phases of the rivalry over four chapters: the first from Partition in 1947 to Pakistan’s first military coup in 1958; the second from 1959 to the conclusion of the Simla Agreement in 1972, in the aftermath of the war in what was then East Pakistan; the third from 1972 to the end of the Cold War in 1989; and the last from 1990 until 2021. In each, Mohan explores the main militarized disputes between India and Pakistan and then the roles played by the great powers and linked issues, as well as the military balance and domestic politics of both states. Having explained the persistence of this complex rivalry, he turns in the conclusion to examining the prospects for its resolution.

This is a rich book and one that repays careful reading. Mohan has assembled and assessed an impressive amount of evidence. He provides useful tables of every major and minor militarized dispute that occurred between 1947 and 2021, defense spending, and various political indicators, taken from the *Correlates of War* and other major databases. His ambitious model also draws attention to both drivers of the dispute and its turning points.

*Complex Rivalry* has shortcomings, however. Some are theoretical and others empirical. Parsimony and arguably also clarity are lost in the effort to be “holistic” and “cross-paradigmatic” (p. 3) and draw together many theories into one model. It is not clear why the model should have hubs and spokes or why that metaphor is useful in this context. Alternative heuristics—levels of analysis, for example—might have been more helpful. Promising ideas, such as the applicability of the concept of punctuated equilibrium to the rivalry, are picked up and then left behind, leaving the reader wondering why. Others appear to have been misapplied. The use of power transition theory to explain aspects of the rivalry in the 1950s, for example, is difficult to comprehend. But the biggest problem concerns causation: the model is constructed in a way that makes identifying which variable caused what effect unclear.

There are some issues too with the cases. Political opinions not wholly supported by evidence skew the analysis, especially concerning the United States. In his analysis of the 1950s, Mohan argues that the West was

partly to blame for the onset of the rivalry, pointing to “irreconcilable differences” (p. 99) with India arising early in the decade. He blames Washington for the “blatant recruitment” of Pakistan to the anticommunist cause and for supporting Islamabad’s “revisionist” agenda for Kashmir (p. 103). In the 1960s, he finds the United States “arming Pakistan against India” (p. 122) and suggests that both the Southeast Asian and Central Asian treaty organizations were aimed, at least in part, at India (pp. 133–34). In the 1990s, he maintains that the United States sought to “contain” both India and Pakistan (p. 233). These views are contentious and have been found wanting by several recent studies, including Rudra Chaudhuri’s *Forged in Crisis: India and the United States since 1947* (2014) and Tanvi Madan’s *Fateful Triangle: How China Shaped U.S.-India Relations during the Cold War* (2020).

In the book’s conclusion, Mohan explores potential ways of ending India and Pakistan’s rivalry. He observes—with justification—that the rivalry has weathered multiple political and international shocks and suggests that, without drastic action to address its underlying causes, this situation will likely persist. What is needed, he thinks, is a change of mindset in both New Delhi and Islamabad, a move away from “realpolitik” and some “unpopular and risky decisions” (p. 285). With the right kind of leadership, he goes on, Kashmir could become another Alsace-Lorraine, a territory contested for more than 70 years, now at the symbolic center of a prosperous and peaceful European Union that grew out of Franco–German reconciliation (pp. 50, 284–85).

That comparison will strike some readers as odd, but it is also revealing. The status of Alsace-Lorraine was settled not by bold leadership and even-handed negotiation but by comprehensive defeat in war, followed by a dictated peace. The example points to a more plausible and parsimonious explanation for the persistence of the India–Pakistan rivalry unexplored in the book: the inability of either party to find a way to impose its will on the other. Despite this weakness, *Complex Rivalry* is a creative and thoughtful contribution to our understanding of this apparently unending contest for territory.

**Dangerous Instrument: Political Polarization and US Civil-Military Relations.** By Michael A. Robinson. New York: Oxford University Press, 2022. 312p. \$110.00 cloth, \$29.95 paper.

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The United States is a highly polarized country. Its contemporary politics are characterized by “us versus them” thinking and hostility toward members of the opposite party. Meanwhile, civil–military relations in the United States have, in recent times, been the subject of

much debate and, particularly among civil–military relations scholars, worry. From Gen. Mark A. Milley’s walk across Lafayette Square with Trump to the dangerous precedent set by both Trump and Biden in appointing recently retired military officers to lead the Department of Defense, the twin trends of affective polarization among the American public and the politicization of US civil–military relations are a recipe for disaster. Yet such events and broad political polarization coincide with continued confidence and trust in the US military, particularly relative to other institutions like Congress, the presidency, the courts, and the media.

This is the setting that Michael A. Robinson enters with his new book, *Dangerous Instrument*. As part of the “Bridging the Gap” series of Oxford University Press, Robinson asks several questions: “With whom does the military have credibility, and why? What are the *limits* of that credibility, and how does this reflect the depths of polarization? What are the implications of such deference to the armed forces on the future of democratic governance?” (p. 3). Robinson’s answers to these questions are, from the perspective of healthy democratic civil–military relations, troubling.

Robinson introduces a new model, the “parallax model,” to help us understand and provide terminology for the politicization of the military in US politics. It focuses on three main actors: the military, the public, and the partisan political establishment (p. 37). Simply put, the public’s views of the military—seeing the military on an ideological spectrum—are based on the perceived position of the military relative to political parties. Robinson introduces four types of politicization—active, passive, relative, and aspect politicization—to capture the degree to which the military is actively involved in politics or is thrown into politics by politicians, whether the politicization is a result of shifting ideological currents in the American public, or whether dimensions of the partisan information environment (especially the media) render the military closer to one end of the ideological spectrum (pp. 39–46). The politicization does not need to be intentional, either on the part of the military or politicians, or indeed “real,” in the sense that much of it depends on perceptions. Further, all four types of politicization from the parallax model can occur at the same time. This renders fixing the problem quite difficult but also allows scholars and policy makers to have a more precise vocabulary for discussing politicization, while also enabling researchers to better trace the “cascading effects” (p. 172) of different types of politicizing activity to other forms of politicizing activity.

*Dangerous Instrument*’s empirical chapters examine and test several aspects of Robinson’s theory. First, chapter 3 demonstrates that military voices are “co-optable.” Using a survey experiment, Robinson shows that the military is a voice that is worth co-opting for partisans

because the public deems military voices to be highly credible. Chapter 4 uses text analyses (topic modeling) to show that negative military performances received less attention in conservative media than in liberal media. Partisans receive different information about the military, and this has downstream consequences for how the military is viewed by those on the Left or Right and for questions of accountability. Chapter 5, again using survey experiments, shows that Democrats and independents “update” their information about the military when told about scandals and negative information about it, whereas Republicans do not. Finally, chapter 6 shows that partisans only seem to care about partisan activity on the part of retired military officers when the military officer is of the “wrong” type (e.g., a Democrat assessing a Republican or vice versa). Taken together, these chapters demonstrate that the military is (1) capturable by partisan politics, (2) portrayed and received differently across the political spectrum, and (3) therefore not immune to politicization.

This book is an excellent contribution to the literature on US civil–military relations. It expertly weaves together insights from American politics and civil–military relations and uses advanced experimental and text analysis techniques and analyses of survey and media evidence. Given the book’s ambition and use of multiple survey experiments, however, it was sometimes difficult to keep all the moving parts coherently together. Furthermore, as Robinson acknowledges, the use of survey experiments lends strong causal identification but just provides snapshots in time. On this score, I thought the book could have given the reader a broader, more historically contextualized, picture of what we are seeing today in the United States.

Something I particularly liked about the book was the effort not just to characterize the problems of polarization and politicization but also to speak to potential solutions and best practices (chap. 7). Robinson offers many solutions, including but not limited to (1) making future officers more politically literate; (2) providing opportunities for officers to engage with civilian officials and enhance a more general public understanding; (3) adopting new perspectives on civil–military relations, including looking abroad for more cross-national understandings of civil–military relations; (4) ensuring that the public understands the difference between active-duty and veteran service members and military-looking individuals (e.g., militia members) and actual members of the US armed forces; and (5) making the military a “harder target” for politicization, including preventing extremism and educating the rank and file in digital literacy (p. 174–91). These suggestions are surely correct and are, importantly, actionable. The recommendations ask something of those within the military *and* of civilians.

It remains to be seen, considering the trends Robinson identifies in the book, how long the US public will

continue to show strong support and confidence in the military. Republican politicians, from Tommy Tuberville to Matt Gaetz, have used the military and its supposed “woke” policies as part of an ongoing culture war. This has led to recent declines in trust in the military among Republicans, a trend that will likely continue. Given the clarity and thoughtfulness of Robinson’s text, people on both sides of the civil–military relationship, as well as scholars interested in the health of American democracy, should read this book.

**Normalization in World Politics.** By Gëzim Visoka and Nicolas Lemay-Hébert. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2022. 212p. \$70.00 cloth, \$29.95 paper.  
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In media and scholarly accounts in IR and beyond, questions around stability and change in national and global politics hinge on conceptions of what is normal. The spread of right-wing populism, the existential threat of climate change, and rising concerns about the unraveling of the rules-based liberal world order have raised questions around changing conceptions of normal. Yet, as Gëzim Visoka and Nicolas Lemay-Hébert keenly show, the crucially salient concept of normalcy remains, rather puzzlingly, undertheorized in IR. In their excellent new book, *Normalization in World Politics*, Visoka and Lemay-Hébert take this limitation head-on to theorize normalcy and to problematize and map the varied ways that states and organizations attempt to (re)assert it in global politics.

*Normalization in World Politics* centers on big questions around recurrent claims to normalcy made by major states and international organizations. The authors ask, “How can we make sense of these invocations of normalcy?” (p. 2), and they seek to explore what work these invocations do in global politics. To these ends, Visoka and Lemay-Hébert critically map the varied discursive and practical means by which states and international organizations make claims as to what is (ab)normal as means of affecting order-making in global politics. More specifically, the authors center attention on various state-led interventions grounded in a common “will to normalize” (pp. 4, 152). Through a conceptually innovative investigation resting on rich critical discourse analysis, the authors highlight three broad situations—imposing, restoring, or accepting normalcy—by which actors establish or contest some version of normal and thereby enforce or reinforce a hierarchy of power and domination in global politics.

To develop their account, Visoka and Lemay-Hébert start from Foucault and adopt a relational lens, understanding there to be no singular conception of normal: instead, it is

made up of context-specific, contingent, and, thus, contested claims by social agents. As the authors show in some detail, normalcy is also a contested concept across literatures (p. 33). However, they offer a productive account centered on how discursive claims of normalcy or acts of normalization construct what is abnormal and enforce existing or impose new ways of knowing or doing as normal. The authors unearth and systematize three prominent technologies of normalization: liberal interventionism, resilience and disaster management, and confessionary practices. These practices, adopted by states and organizations alike, correspond to the imposition, restoration, or acceptance of normalcy (pp. 9, 40).

The book is structured around this three-part theorization of the practices of normalization. After an introduction, in chapter 2 the authors develop their theoretical account. They detail the descriptive and prescriptive dynamics of laying claims to and practicing “normal” across major accounts in social and political theory. They take Foucault and his three figures of abnormal as the starting point to make sense of how certain states and organizations engage in varied discourses and practices of normalization (p. 37). After some conceptual scaffolding, Visoka and Lemay-Hébert articulate their own account, which centers on the categorization of states as fragile or failed, disaster affected, and suppressive, and the corresponding categories of normalization discourse and practice—imposition, restoration, and acceptance—that rely on varied normalization technologies: liberal interventionism, disaster management, and confessionary practices (p. 40).

In chapters 3–5, Visoka and Lemay-Hébert apply this three-part analytical approach to three broad cases or “clusters of normalization discourses in world politics” around imposed, restored, and accepted normalcy (p. 16). Chapter 3 centers on externally imposed normalcy on fragile or failed states: the “prototypical monsters” of the Western-dominated international community that deify expectations of normalcy based on contingent conceptions of a rules-based international order (p. 55). Here, the authors detail the implicit knowledge that makes possible varied practices within liberal interventionism, including dynamics of peacebuilding and state-building across cases of so-called failed and fragile states that are deemed to be outside the laws of nature and politics. These include Somalia, Kosovo, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Timor-Leste, Afghanistan, and Iraq.

Chapter 4 centers discourses and practices around “restoring normalcy” through varied natural disaster management interventions that are designed to bring about either a return to normalcy or promote a new normal (p. 98). Visoka and Lemay-Hébert center attention on the Philippines after Typhoon Haiyan or Yolanda in 2013, the United States after Hurricane Katrina in 2005, and Haiti after the 2010 earthquake—and the logic and efforts by