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Introduction

Normative Transformation, Prohibitions, and International Politics

The corporate view inside CIA was ‘We don’t want to do covert action. And if we do covert action, we want it to be neat and clean. We don’t want to be involved in killing people. Because we’re not like that. We’re not Mossad.’

Richard Clarke¹

We tortured some folks.

Barack Obama²

1.1 Introduction to the Introduction

This is a book about norms: how they change and how they work; how they shape who does what, to whom, and how. It is also a book about innovation: creative attempts by practitioners to surmount strategic and ethical obstacles, in the process developing new ways of acting and being. Finally, it is a book about institutions and organisations and about how institutional culture and authority shapes practice and is, in turn, reshaped by it. It is about all these things because they are all parts of the huge, deeply contentious transformation that has taken place in US foreign and defence policy since 2001 as part of its global ‘war on terrorism’. This book is devoted to explaining why and how a state can radically change its practices surrounding the use of violence in pursuit of national security objectives, in ways that at first glance imply counternormative, transgressive violations of established international and domestic prohibitions. It offers an account of the evolution of the US

¹ Quoted in Mazzetti (2013).

² See <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2014/08/01/press-conference-president>.

security apparatus to encompass new understandings of what counts as ethical, professional, proportional, and appropriate counterterrorism.

From the start of the millennium, the United States has engaged in counterterrorism and military activities that many observers consider to be prohibited, illegitimate, or otherwise contrary to prevailing international norms. Using unmanned aircraft, the CIA began targeting and killing specific persons as part of a massive, and still ongoing, paramilitarisation of their duties as the country's primary foreign intelligence service. Concurrently, the CIA also began a smaller, but no less significant, programme to detain and interrogate suspected members of terrorist groups, in ways that many observers, including President Barack Obama, have explicitly referred to as torture. Finally, private military and security contractors have increasingly taken on combatant duties that previously would have only been performed by uniformed and official military personnel, in ways that appear to many to be mercenarism. All this has been despite prohibitions on assassination, torture, and the use of mercenaries having been enshrined in domestic law, international convention, and institutional culture.

This change was not merely a matter of strategic need or instrumental re-evaluation of what was most efficient or effective counterterrorism. Significant actors involved in these practices pushed back against them or expressed scepticism towards them on normative grounds, articulating concerns over what was right or proper. They did so by referring not just to laws but to embedded institutional norms, organisational history, and past experience of scandal, professionalism, and other dynamics warranting focused sociological investigation. These cases – targeted killing, torture, and the employment of armed private contractors – thus raise an important and interesting question: how did the prohibited so quickly become the permissible?

I argue that previously prohibited practices emerge as a result of the situated problem-solving attempts of practitioners whose existing practices do not allow them to surmount pressing strategic and ethical obstacles. To do this, practitioners weave together ethical and strategic reasoning, in ways that cannot be explained through theories of decision-making that isolate one single logic of action. The outcome is that new practices become *institutionalised*: they became ongoing components of formal and informal social arrangements, gaining legitimacy from their position within broader authority structures and becoming part of the

expected and reproduced array of activities associated with a particular role or profession. This process of institutionalisation is the concrete manifestation of normative transformation – whether or not it revolves around any single ‘norm’.

Drawing on insights from relational sociology and pragmatist social theory, I show that practices – and prohibitions – transform as a result of three linked processes. The first is the redefinition of actions so that they are repositioned or displaced within existing conventional social arrangements, termed *convention reorientation*. The second is the employment of new technologies in ways that reconstitute users and change the choices available to them, termed *technological revision*. The third is the production of new authorities in existing institutional networks through the formation of new bureaucratic relationships, termed *network synthesis*.

I also argue that prohibitions range across whole constellations of institutionally embedded norms – what I term ‘normative configurations’ – and that they exist *in practice*. That is, *prohibitions are not ontologically distinct from the activities they regulate*, and, rather than being defined as discrete social objects (‘norms’), they should be conceptualised as part of the normative dimension of action itself. This perspective clarifies the causal processes underlying how norms influence, and are influenced by, the conduct of war and policymaking. It reveals the way those three mechanisms of change transform the normative commitments of practitioners, linking macro-level cultural and ethical imperatives to the specific activities of bureaucrats, legal experts, politicians, and security personnel.

In this book I use a pragmatist approach to explain how targeted killing, torture (euphemistically termed ‘enhanced interrogation’), and the employment of armed private military and security contractors all became institutionalised practices within the security apparatus of the United States, despite international prohibitions on assassination, torture, and mercenarism. I argue that the nature of post-9/11 security threats and the executive preferences of the Bush and Obama administrations generated new ‘problem situations’ for the US security apparatus. Executive support for bellicose counterterrorism, the rise of a military, legal, and operational logic to counterterrorist policy, and the development of sophisticated armed unmanned aerial vehicles led to the development of an extensive targeted killing programme within the CIA and, to a lesser degree, the military. The willingness of the Bush

administration to approve aggressive intelligence-gathering measures and provide legal cover for them, along with the development of a new psychological science of interrogation through inducing ‘learned helplessness’ in detainees, led to the development of a detention and interrogation programme within the CIA, with some of its practices further diffusing into military interrogations as well. The needs of US administrators and government departments in the war zones of Afghanistan and Iraq, permissive post-invasion legal environments, and developments in communications and organisational technologies led to the extensive use of private contractors to perform security duties that would otherwise be performed by uniformed military personnel.

In all cases, apparent and applicable norms were reinterpreted and revised in the process of transformations in practice. This is in large part what makes them confusing. For scholars of international politics, it is usually not surprising when states respond to escalating threats with escalating violence or adopt less restrained foreign and defence policies to navigate more dangerous environments. This is consistent with rationalist and realist views about strategy and security. Yet thirty years of constructivist scholarship has established that there are notable exceptions to this expectation, in cases where principled restraint supersedes the choice to employ greater force. Given the prior existence of established prohibitions, formal and informal, against assassination, torture, and mercenarism, all three of the cases I examine in this book are, so to speak, exceptions to the exception; they involve a shift from principled restraint to something more permissive, and the puzzle lies in how that was possible.

A second puzzle lies in the fact that the present-day trajectory of these three cases indicates different degrees of transformation, in practice and in prohibition. Targeted killing seems to now be not only an established, normal feature of the US security apparatus but also a relatively routine practice for the United Kingdom – and while it has long been so for Israel, it has become more common since the United States ceased to disapprove of it. In other words, a transformation of practice that began primarily within the United States has since been replicated in other countries. On the other end of the spectrum, ‘enhanced interrogation’ has been largely eschewed by practitioners within the US security apparatus, with its associated practices and claims to normative legitimacy undermined and rolled back by internal bureaucratic and legislative opposition. Moreover,

other countries allied with the United States have not set up similar programmes of violent interrogation – either they already had such programmes or they lacked the bureaucratic and normative impetus to establish them. Private military and security contractors are deployed in much smaller numbers now that the US military expeditions in Afghanistan and Iraq have largely ended, while industry-led self-regulation has by and large ended the prevalence of private combatants, but their employment in armed security duties is nevertheless now an established fixture of US government operations in a wide range of locales. Other countries also began to employ armed contractors in increasingly greater numbers during the ‘Global War on Terror’ years, but none in such numbers or with such integration with government agencies and forces as the United States. There is, therefore, a sense in which the United States both led the way and led the pack in these practices. And overall, while the pattern of transformation was thus the same in all three cases – an interaction of the mechanisms of convention reorientation, technological revision, and network synthesis – they vary in the extent to which the transformations are robust, institutionalised, and uncontested.

1.2 Norm Transformation and the Puzzle of Apparent Prohibition Demise

The standard narrative of the US war on terrorism is one of progressive erosion of legal and moral restraint, as military commitments intensified and security interests crystallised into a bellicose unilateralism of boundless geographic scope. On this account, the United States was shocked to the core by the attacks of 11 September 2001. Facing unprecedented domestic casualties and a public in need of reassurance, the Bush administration quickly launched a major military campaign in Afghanistan, on the grounds that the Taliban regime bore partial responsibility for al-Qa‘ida’s actions since it was harbouring the group and was unwilling to expel it. Simultaneous to this military operation, the United States unleashed a rapidly expanding CIA to find and unravel, anywhere in the world, al-Qa‘ida’s networks. Grappling with the difficulty of this task both inside Afghanistan and in unfamiliar locales across South Asia and the Middle East, the US security apparatus, under direction from the Bush administration, resorted to increasingly brutal and counter-normative means,

employing torture, extraordinary rendition, and assassination. The 2003 invasion of Iraq constituted a major escalation in this process and appeared to many to indicate a kind of crusade, with the menace of terrorism, the religion of Islam, and the region of the Middle East collectively forming a new battleground in which the standards of Just War Theory were unrealistic or inapplicable (Crawford 2003). Fighting two difficult wars, the US security apparatus began, intellectually, to draw upon colonial and Cold War-era theories of counterinsurgency, while it bureaucratically came to rely heavily on proxies, in the form of armed private military contractors and allied regimes, which together offered the additional manpower and local presence that the US lacked. As these processes accelerated and then solidified, the outcome was a new normative environment and a new arrangement of security, military, and regulatory institutions.

In this account, certain moments or manifestations became emblematic of the new realities of the war on terrorism: the CIA's 'black sites' and use of waterboarding, along with detention sites at Guantanamo Bay and, after 2003, Abu Ghraib; the spectre of remote-controlled aircraft ('drones') dropping bombs on unsuspecting targets, selected in secret procedures, not just in Iraq but also in the undeclared war-zones of north-western Pakistan and Yemen – and later, north and north-eastern Africa; armed mercenaries firing into crowds of unarmed protestors in Baghdad; and, throughout this process, the increasing digitisation of the US intelligence apparatus, with expanding surveillance capacities threatening civil liberties at home and filling the sky abroad with cameras and missiles. Together, these images, and the account that gives them context, imply a major shift in what right and wrong uses of force look like – and what is acceptable for a 'liberal' country to do in the name of national security.

Given the evident normative dimension to the development of the US war on terrorism, and in particular the apparent erosion or demise of prohibitions that once were extensive and strong, the literature on 'norm change' seems like an obvious place to look for an explanation. One helpful way of understanding the history and direction of this research programme is to conceive of it in terms of waves. The first wave, mainly spanning the 1990s and early 2000s (see, among others, Kratochwil and Ruggie 1986; Kratochwil 1989; Nadelmann 1990; Barkin and Cronin 1994; Finnemore 1996a; 1996b; Katzenstein 1996), sought mainly to establish the salience of a normative dimension

to the conduct of international politics. By the end of the 1990s, scholars were developing complex models of the ‘life cycles’ of norms (Finnemore and Sikkink 1998) and of the reasons why some norms endure while others disappear or fail to become prominent in the first place (see, among others, Klotz 1995; Keck and Sikkink 1998). Beginning in the early 2000s, a second wave of norms scholarship studied how existing norms manifest in varying ways and how norm-compliance differs across contexts (Hoffmann 2010; for examples, see, among others, Shannon 2000; Acharya 2004; Cortell and Davis 2005; Sandholtz 2008; Wiener 2004; 2008; Krook and True 2012). The most recent scholarship on norms continues this trend of further excavating the role of local agency (Bucher 2014) and reaches for increasingly sophisticated sociological perspectives on the dynamics of contestation and creativity within disputes over norms (Kornprobst 2007; Wiener 2008; 2014; Schmidt 2014) – the first moves towards an emerging third wave of scholarship on the causal role of norms in IR.

Despite their diversity, most norms scholars agree on some basic things. Early work varied somewhat on the definition of a norm but converged on a view best (and popularly) summarised by the definition of norms as ‘standard[s] of appropriate behavior for actors with a given identity’ (Keck and Sikkink 1998, 891), with both a subjective and intersubjective dimension (Hoffmann 2010), shaping actors’ moral opinions and featuring in processes of socialisation and social regulation, respectively. According to this view, norms are features of the social world that guide people in how to live and make up the context for much of their life in the first place. A consequence of this definition is that norms are treated as discrete, causally efficacious objects – as ‘things’ (cf. Krook and True 2012). That is, norms – however subject to contestation and transformation – exert themselves upon the world; they possess an influence as independent or irreducible objects in our social ontology and thus can play a role in claims of cause and effect. Moreover, while some second-wave norms scholarship assigns a local and fluid existence to norms-as-objects, many scholars still grant norms a great deal of autonomy across social time and space. In other words, norms exist as travelling units of moral information, embodied in social and psychological form, influencing the course of things.

Yet this understanding of norms is problematic for understanding the apparent erosion or rollback of prohibitions. Norms research has theorised the emergence and spread of prohibitions, such as on nuclear

weapons (Tannenwald 1999), chemical weapons (Price 1995), and slavery (Keck and Sikkink 1998), but this work is preoccupied mainly with when states *restrain themselves* from particular forms of violence, rather than the reverse. The small number of scholars who have considered this phenomenon have mainly framed it as the ‘death’ of norms – for it follows that if norms have a life cycle, then they can die – suggesting that actions in apparent violation of prohibitions have occurred because those prohibitions ceased to exist. However, as an empirical fact, those responsible for targeted killing, coercive interrogation, and the use of private military and security contractors all aver the continued existence and legitimacy of prohibitions on assassination, torture, and mercenarism. They have not argued that the relevant norms are improper or wrong; they have instead claimed that their actions do not actually fall under the prohibitions. In other words, normative contestation in these cases has not been over whether assassination, torture, and mercenarism should be permissible or prohibited but rather over what these activities actually are in practice.³ This shows evolution in the normative scope of these prohibitions: a change in the reference-relation between the articulatable principles or values associated with a given prohibition and the situational ways in which it informs right, virtuous, and appropriate conduct.

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. Scholars claiming otherwise are imposing their evaluative judgements on social processes as though they are objective categories, reifying analytical distinctions into supposedly independent states of affairs. This also does not accord with the evidence, which shows that involved actors raised continued normative objections and

³ For example, some claim that the CIA’s interrogation practices indicate the demise of the norm prohibiting torture (McKeown 2009; Panke and Petersohn 2011). More recent claims by both President Obama (2014) and prominent legislators (see Dianne Feinstein in *The Committee Study of the Central Intelligence Agency’s Detention and Interrogation Program* [2014]) that such practices were both torture and wrong suggest that rumours of ‘norm-death’ were in this case greatly exaggerated. Yet, many of those responsible for the CIA’s interrogation programme contend both charges – denying that interrogations were ineffective and that they were torture – while affirming the illegitimacy of torture as such (Harlow 2015).

justifications throughout, implying the continued existence of meaningful norms with regulative force. In other words, normative *transformation* is also, here, normative *evolution*. Extant theories of norm dynamics, even those that directly tackle the issue of ‘norm deterioration’ (see, for example, McKeown 2009; Panke and Petersohn 2011), along with attempts to tackle the interpretive and pragmatic evolution of *norms as such* (Schmidt 2014; Hofferberth and Weber 2015), therefore also lack the apparatus for explaining the institutional changes that have taken place in the three cases I study in this book. This means scholars must remain methodologically agnostic as to whether old norms have ‘died’ and been replaced by new ones and instead must trace how norms have changed.

The primary approach IR scholars have taken to norms makes this task difficult. This approach has tended to be oriented around one specific conception of ‘norms’ – namely, as discrete social entities, sometimes called ‘ideational’ in contrast with ‘material’, which have the ability to influence behaviour as such. Here lies a problem: this view has facilitated a progressive theoretical research programme in the field, but it is focused on the genesis of major new regulative or normative regimes, rather than more specific changes in how those regimes are institutionalised. These nevertheless can have significant consequences, as shown by the contentious counterterrorism activities I am discussing. Recent and ambitious contributions challenge these horizons but are still held within them. They are unable to escape the constraints of theorising *norms as an assumed theoretical category* and are oriented more towards outlining methods of analysis rather than proposing substantive explanatory mechanisms.

Another way to say this is that ‘norms’ are reifications. Reification is a discursive move that denotes institutions as objects rather than periods, places, or episodes of stability in an unfolding arrangement of relationships and practices. Lukács, in his 1923 essay on reification, defined this as when ‘a relation between people takes on the character of a thing and thus acquires a “phantom objectivity”’ (1971, 83). Giddens (1984) cautioned against it as well: ‘[Reification] refers to the ‘facticity’ with which social phenomena confront individual actors in such a way as to ignore how they are produced and reproduced through human agency’ (180). This does not necessary make ‘norms’ worthless concepts, as theories are built from abstractions that simplify and summarise the world for the sake of explanatory efficiency. But it

does suggest that normativity can matter in ways not captured by the concept of ‘norms’ as such. For example, there are settings where actors themselves do not orient their actions around norms, or they do so in ways that nevertheless are more fruitfully understood with a more processual and less substantivist vocabulary for talking about normativity than as the force exerted by unit norms. In other words, theories oriented around changes in ‘norms’ may be unable to offer the conceptual architecture to properly describe the kind of change that has occurred, nor how it happened.

The solution I advance here *de-reifies* ‘norms’ into the configurations of institutionalised relationships and practices that constitute them. By ‘de-reify’, I mean the redescription of ‘norms’ as granular arrangements of conventions, values, and routines of action spanning multiple legal, bureaucratic, and legislative fields.⁴ It is a reversal of reification: instead of objectifying and concretising processes of institutional evolution, imagining them to be sociocultural ‘things’ with independent properties, I redefine the object in terms of sets of ongoing practices and relations that generate normativity. To do this, I develop the alternative concept of ‘normative configuration’, and, by using it to account for the ways valuation, disciplining, and contestation proceed in practice, I find a way of re-accounting for putative norms in non-objectified and non-concretised terms. I focus on the ways practices are structured and restructured around internal normativity and thus how innovation in practice is not only strategic or ends-oriented but also an attempt to navigate ethical dilemmas as well. I connect shifts in the forms of violence that are internationally permitted and prohibited to *concrete, problem-driven transformations* in how those within the US security apparatus defined and carried out their roles, dealt with contestation

⁴ By ‘routines’ I mean actions that are standardised, normalised, often partially habituated so that they are performed without active reflection or conscious intent, and associated with a practice or position rather than personal idiosyncrasy. The closest alternative term might be ‘repertoire’, which conveys some of these traits but carries a greater connotation of choice and instrumentality. I have preferred ‘routines’ for two reasons. One is simply that ‘repertoires’ has a particular meaning within the voluminous literature on social movements (see McAdam et al. 2001), and I do not want to digress into this literature to ensure readers do not confuse my use of the term with how it is used there. The second is that ‘routines’ capture the enacted and processual nature of normativity in action. They are not bodies of knowledge, sometimes drawn on and sometimes held in store, but unfolding operations in, and on, the world.

from internal and external opponents, and oriented themselves within their institutional environments.

1.3 Plan of the Book

This book seeks to show that transformations of prohibitions on particular kinds of state violence are best explained through theories oriented around practitioner-driven innovation and contestation. In the first part of the book, I develop a theoretical and methodological approach for conceptualising the normativity of practice and for specifying the mechanisms by which it changes in form. In the second part, I examine the cases of targeted killing, interrogation, and use of private military and security contractors as cases of normative transformation through linked moral and strategic problem-solving.

Chapter 2 presents a theory of normativity. I begin by examining what theories of normativity (and norms) are supposed to explain, arguing that, in these theories, ‘norms’ are reified conceptual abstractions separating out the ethical dimensions of action and assigning them independent causal capacities. Drawing on pragmatist and relational social theory, I develop the alternative concept of ‘normative configurations’ as a way to understand how normativity operates and changes. I rest the concept of normative configurations on four premises: that normativity is embedded in action (rather than being distinct from it); that normativity provides both ends and means for action (rather than providing only ends); that normativity links ends and means recursively (rather than ends influencing means but not vice versa); and that normativity crystallises into institutional arrangements through the stabilisation of practices (rather than through discursive or formal constitutive processes independent from practice). Together these premises can orient investigations of normative changes without referencing the movements or life cycles of norms. In other words, in this chapter I explain what is involved in conceptualising prohibitions as ‘normative configurations’ rather than as ‘norms’ and when this makes for more satisfying theories of practice and action.

Chapter 3 lays out three specific mechanisms denoting the causal processes of normative transformation in the three cases I investigate, as well as a three-step methodology for analysing them. My proposal is that what may appear from the outside to be ‘norm death’ is the outcome of practitioners engaging in problem-solving through

attempts at reframing contentious issues and actions, finding new technological aides, and navigating bureaucratic politics. These attempts drive the operation of the mechanisms of convention reorientation, technological revision, and network synthesis. I then outline how to structure case-specific data to map out a given normative configuration, identify where its potential for transformation lies – essentially, where actors are most likely to need to innovate upon it – and trace, over time, how a transformation was brought about. Finally, I discuss the types of data that may be employed for this form of analysis and how the particular challenges of data collection in the study of often-covert security institutions has led me to prefer some kinds of data over others.

Chapter 4 examines the case of targeted killing and the prohibition on assassination. I find that the (international) prohibition on assassination was institutionalised within the US security apparatus primarily through executive orders and informal standards of professionalism within the CIA, revolving around civil–military relations and the separation of military functions from the intelligence services. The prohibition also rested on military laws and ethical standards defining assassination as perfidious or dishonourable. Following the 11 September 2001 terrorist attacks, the executive and legislative environment for counterterrorism changed, establishing both pressures and permissions for the CIA, by way of its internal counterterrorism unit, to develop the capacity to target and kill specific individuals, primarily outside of areas where broader expeditions of US forces were deployed. By redefining its counterterrorism function as (para) military rather than civilian, by employing (and pushing for the further development of) armed unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs), and by forging new alliances with friendly officials in the Bush administration, the CIA developed a robust targeted killing programme, undergoing a bureaucratic transformation in the process. Under the Obama administration, this transformation intensified, even as by this time targeted killing operations were also being performed by uniformed military units. During this second phase, targeted killing underwent additional legal and organisational formalisation, institutionalising it within the structure of the US security apparatus. As a result, both the practices of targeting and the prohibition on assassination changed.

Chapter 5 examines the case of the CIA's detention and interrogation activities and their relationship to the prohibition on torture.

This prohibition was affirmed in a broad array of domestic and international legal commitments, as well as in the institutional culture of the FBI, which until then had been the USA's primary agency responsible for conducting counterterrorism interrogations. With both pressure and permission from the Bush administration to step up its human intelligence-gathering capabilities and to take the lead on a more bellicose, global approach to counterterrorism, the CIA began experimenting with methods that would previously have been normatively proscribed. I find that in addition to executive facilitation, a key technological process drove this transformation: the establishment of a new 'science' of interrogation based around 'learned helplessness'. This in turn allowed proponents of coercive or violent interrogation to frame what they were doing as something other than torture, thereby continuing to affirm the torture prohibition while engaging in actions that would previously have been prohibited under it. Unlike in the case of targeted killing, however, the Obama administration sought to reverse this change in practice and reassert the torture prohibition. Assisted by negative publicity and mounting evidence of inefficacy and scientific illegitimacy, the mechanisms of normative transformation at work in this case, I find, did not result in robust institutionalisation, and thus the normative configuration establishing the prohibition largely reverted to its status quo ante.

Chapter 6 examines the case of the USA's extensive employment of armed private military and security contractors to perform 'combat-like' duties in the war zones of Afghanistan and Iraq, despite international prohibitions on mercenarism. This change in practice is not just particular to the United States, but the United States has nevertheless been, by a considerable margin, the most enthusiastic employer (and provider) of such contractors. I find that this normative transformation began with the urgent need for manpower in the occupation and reconstruction phases of the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq – and in particular the need for armed protection details to guard buildings and offer protection to convoys. As contractors flooded the two war zones, military and government officials restructured their chains of command and communication, improving flows of information, learning to coordinate operations, and developing professional standards to regulate the industry. The current global state of affairs does not feature many private military and security contractors deployed in identical

ways to uniformed soldiers, and thus the prohibition on mercenarism has clearly not gone. However, both within the United States and elsewhere, armed contractors are now a normal part of stability operations, and thus a clear change in practice and in prohibition has nevertheless occurred.

Finally, Chapter 7 offers some conclusions about normative transformations, prohibitions, and the study of practices – not only with respect to the state and violence but also beyond both. First, I compare my case-specific findings to develop some meta-level analytical and methodological observations. I also connect my findings, which are generally focused on changes specific to the US defence and foreign policy apparatuses, to the broader issue of the normative status of assassination, torture, and mercenarism in international perspective. I argue that there are some insights about the current state of international prohibitions that can be drawn from an examination of their role and status in the US security apparatus, even without examining the contemporary policies and practices of other states. Second, I discuss how my approach to conceptualising and tracing normative transformations can be used to study transnational communities and global non-state governance, which are two significant areas of study in the field that lie outside the usual category of norms scholarship. Third and lastly, I discuss two normative implications of my findings, pertaining to the ethics of counterterrorism as a matter of practical ethics and to the relationship between facts and values as a matter of meta-ethics. Ultimately, I claim that a practice-centric, pragmatist, and relational approach to normativity promises to open up a wider range of social processes for analysis, and this is of value to scholars, practitioners, and activists in a number of areas.