reconstituting (Islamizing) the constitution, national identity, and the court system, essentially reversing the causal arrow. I am suggesting that the legal structure and politics of Malaysia are co-constitutive: rather than one shaping the other, they are mutually shaping each other in what the British sociologist Anthony Giddens would call a “structuring process.”

The book consists of seven chapters and an introduction. The first four chapters provide the historical and theoretical background, and the last three chapters are more empirical in nature. The author’s approach is multidisciplinary. He uses sources from anthropology, political science, Islamic studies, legal studies, history, and religious studies to provide interesting observations and insights throughout the book. The book would have been still richer if he had also taken account of some of the critical developments in postcolonial theory that address how Islam has been distorted by its encounter with colonialism. This is especially true in the second chapter, “The Secular Roots of Islamic Law in Malaysia,” in which the author seeks to explain the emergence of Anglo-Muslim law in Malaysia when the British codified Islamic legal precepts according to English legal traditions. Moustafa argues that this so-called Islamic law would be unrecognizable to a classically trained Islamic jurist but not to an ordinary lawyer unfamiliar with Islamic law. In that same chapter, he recognizes the power of naming; perhaps he could have titled this chapter something like the colonial roots of Islamic law in Malaysia, because he is treating colonial powers as secular. But how could the colonial regime be secular if it was codifying and implementing religious laws? France passed a law in 1905 that is seen as the country’s main source of enforcement of secularism and marginalization of religion. But this law was not applied in Algeria, and a dichotomy similar to that in Malaysia was maintained in Algeria by France. Is it possible that the colonial legacy, and not Islam per se, is the main reason why Muslim societies are struggling to find a role for Islam in the public domain?

Chapter 4, “The Judicialization of Religion,” is fascinating. Moustafa examines several cases to show how decisions in those cases not only judicialized religion but also provided more fodder for conflict between so-called Islamic rites and liberal rights. This is the best empirical chapter in the book, and it suggests, at least to me, that the real tension might be one of levels of analysis. Liberalism conceptualizes religious freedom in individual terms, whereas Islamic jurisprudence constructs it in communal terms. For liberals the individual is autonomous and must have the freedom to choose. But in Islamic jurisprudence, religious communities must have the freedom from state interference to adjudicate their affairs freely; that may include the freedom to deprive their members of individual freedoms to choose without state interference. The subsequent chapters trace the radiating effect of court decisions and legal contestations into social and political spheres. Moustafa provides a very interesting and detailed account of lived Islam and lived liberalism in a Muslim-majority but religiously diverse society.

I started this review by talking about the securitization of Islam in the West. Here too the tensions between religion and secularism, Islam and liberalism, are destabilizing the historic balance of power between religion and the state. While Muslim states deal with the challenge of Islam to liberal constitutions through judicialization, Western states choose to securitize the issue. I wish that Moustafa had made some basic comparisons with Western liberal multireligious states like France or Denmark, which would have certainly enriched his analysis of the Islam–liberalism dialectic.

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

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Insecurity and unpredictability have long been the focus of international relations (IR) research. A number of global events over the last decade seem to have increased insecurity, unpredictability, and concerns over destabilization; these events include the Arab Spring and its aftermath, the rise of ISIS, migration crises, environmental degradation and climate disasters, as well as the widespread rise in populist and nationalist movements. In this stimulating and insightful book, Brent Steele proceeds from such events to argue that their inferred insecurity and unpredictability foreground debates about “restraint” not only as a policy but also as a mode of analysis that calls for an investigation into the challenges of and support for restraint in international politics, from the individual to the group, and from the state level to the structure of the global system as such. A focus on restraint, Steele argues, is a focus on agency and structure, on the body and the mind (the “material” and “ideas”), and involves a moral quality that is subject to interpretation and judgment.

The book spans a wide and rich theoretical and empirical context, moving from a conceptual overview of restraint, especially as discussed and debated in IR theory (chapter 1), to the microfoundations of the concept as examined in neuroscientific, biological, psychological, and sociological terms (chapter 2). It then proceeds to a more direct
engagement with the relationship between restraint and discipline in relation to class, race, and gender (chapter 3) and finally analyzes restraint in a number of contemporary contexts of global politics (chapters 4–6). Theoretically, the study draws on the social, psychological, and moral dimensions of Norbert Elias and Carl Jung to extend the conceptual definition of restraint toward something that is both individual and relational, both insular and societal.

The empirical settings are mainly US-focused, with the exception of chapter 6 on the role of European states and institutions in the debt crisis of the 2010s. Hence, chapter 4 provides an overview of the arguments made for why democracies tend to be restrained, only to maintain that such parsimonious views of democracy are problematic and that we, at least in a US setting, have more to gain by taking the Jungian notion of libido seriously. This is then applied to generational transitions in the United States, with empirical illustrations of the “fault line” transition between containment and rollback in US foreign policy during the Cold War, especially in regard to the 1956 Suez crisis and the “sexual revolution” of the 1960s. By addressing what restraint means in terms of “security,” chapter 5 centers on the role of technology in uprooting and dislocating individuals and groups from their previous routines, habits, and protective institutions. Aided by theories of ontological security and securitization, it then explores restraint in relation to activism and intervention by re-reading two cases that called for US intervention: the 2013 Syrian chemical weapons attack and the 2014 ISIS beheadings. Chapter 6 focuses specifically on discourses of restraint and morality in relation to political economy and global public health. It starts by tracing the suggested relationship between capitalism and restraint and moves on to study the aftermath of the 2008–9 global financial crisis and the 2009–15 European debt crisis in which neoliberal advocates were able to use moral discourses to impede and reverse neo-Keynesian interventions. Steele then discusses global public health by focusing on how restraint has been invoked to justify action against particular groups in the name of societal “health,” analyzing the phenomenon of eugenics and forced sterilizations in the twentieth century that targeted the disabled, as well as minorities, immigrants, and women. The book concludes by acknowledging the limits of restraint analytically as well as ethically, while still arguing that “in an era where few devices remain to control, cajole, contain, or routinize human, corporate, and technological impulses in productive ways, restraint may be the ‘best’ of all the worst options we have” (p. 20).

Restraint in International Politics provides an excellent and exceptionally well-informed account of some of the key aspects of world politics today. It does so by analyzing the politics of restraint at times of increased conflict, tension, anxiety, and uncertainty at the individual, state, and global levels. Steele makes a number of bold statements, not least his argument that all the struggles in global politics are really struggles over restraint, whether discussed in relation to the present, the distant past, or anything in between. In defending the focus on restraint, Steele points not only to the lack of any comprehensive accounts of restraint in global politics and to its relationship to other important concepts, such as freedom, independence, autonomy, and power but also how restraint always involves agency—an agent doing something they otherwise would not do. In addition, he justifies a focus on restraint in relation to the increase in technology and communicative exchange where restraint can be viewed as risky and even an object of contempt in a postmodern world. In addition, he asserts that the perceived or real decline of the United States calls for an investigation into the US role in global politics in which restraint is likely to play an important role. Finally, restraint speaks to a number of recent trends in IR theory, such as work on practices, emotions, and aesthetics, as well as the history of the field itself, especially the critical security literature, including ontological security and securitization.

It is this last rationale that I personally find the most interesting: how restraint as both a concept and a mode of analysis speaks to larger IR debates. However, I sometimes found it difficult to navigate through the many different ways in which restraint has been approached in the literature and how it relates to other similar concepts, such as constraint. Steele claims to provide an almost “exhaustive account” of the ways in which restraint has been dealt with, defining it at a minimum level as “going against or resisting something we would otherwise expect to prevail” (p. 22). It is indeed a near-exhaustive discussion, which is both a strength and a weakness. It is a strength in terms of the way in which Steele successfully shows how restraint as a process emerges as a conceptual composite—being both relational and made up of several elements that may not always be commensurable. Relating restraint to Nicholas Onuf’s concept of “heteronomy” and Norbert Elias’s concept of “psychogenesis-sociogenesis,” Steele is able to say something more about how socialization works to limit freedom and choice. By clarifying how restraint provides a common situated analytical space for diverse thinkers, Steele is able to discuss not only different sociological notions of the structure–agency relationship but also the more explicit normative, strategic, and reciprocal dimensions of the concept. This allows Steele to engage with a number of theoretical and empirical IR debates from normative restraint and international law, to strategic restraint in the post–Cold War era, to reciprocal restraint involved in treaties and pacts, and to structural restraint at the global level, involving both Gramscian IR studies and feminist structural theory.

However, the different ways in which he invokes the concept of restraint, theoretically as well as empirically, also make it somewhat difficult to grasp, and although I
appreciate the depth to which Steele goes to be as exhaustive as possible, the study could have benefited from a tighter selection of examples and a more concise conceptual review of restraint. This potential weakness is addressed, however, in the in-depth discussion of Jung in chapter 2 and its treatment of restraint and actionism in global politics, as well as in the detailed description of Elias’s work in chapter 3 and the historical (ab)uses of restraint in relation to race, class, and gender. Steele’s discussion of complexes is particularly interesting here, especially in relation to Jung’s and Elias’s understandings of “civilization” and its disciplining elements. He differentiates between the restrained and the actionist as two complexes where, in Jung’s terminology, the actionist complex refers to the unleashing of the libido as psychic energy, whereas the restrained refers to the ways in which such libido is curtailed, cultured, blocked, or channeled: this discussion is particularly useful for understanding continuity and change in international politics, as well as for appreciating that both forms of action (or inaction) can have both positive and negative effects.

Chapter 2 thus focuses on how in a pluralist international society, states have developed a set of practices and institutions to generate restraint, but that this extends into actionism in the terms of intervening into other “sovereign” states. Or how gendered complexes, especially masculinized complexes, are not only likely to portray restraint as effeminate and action as masculine but also how such complexes prevail and are expressed throughout history and articulated in much IR theorizing. The complex itself, as Steele concludes, is “both structure and agents over us.” The particular restraint and actionist complexes are also social ideologies that serve as blueprints for how one should (the normative dimension) live and act within the world through time (the ought or moral dimension). This discussion is extended in chapter 3 to account for a politics of restraint and the unequal application of it across and against particular groups. Steele shows that the role of fantasy, as recently explored by a number of IR scholars from a Lacanian perspective, also plays an important role in Elias’s account, especially as related to the exaggerated role of Blame–Gossip. Steele here takes a very important step by interpreting Elias’s Established–Outsider dimension from a Jungian perspective, in which fantasies and blame become related to an insecurity that provides a basis for action and disciplinary moves: restraint as related to moderation and punishment, embedded in the Foucauldian notion of “disciplinary institutions.” From this follows a brilliant account of how restraint, but also actionism, is and has been gendered, classed, and racialized throughout history and how it has time and again legitimated behavioral, cultural, and emotional governance, both of the body and the mind. Much recent IR theorizing has extended such discussions, not least as a result of feminist, postcolonial, and poststructural critical engagement with the discipline itself, as well as with the logics of history writing. The empirical treatment of global public health in chapter 6 brings many of these insights into a socio-ethical landscape, historically and presently, by showing how public health interventions have targeted certain groups over others. The theoretical chapters structure the analysis of the more empirical chapters concentrated on the restraint versus actionism struggle in processes of security, foreign policy, political economy, and global public health, with a particular focus on the United States and, to a lesser extent, on Europe.

This book provides a very important and invigorating account of restraint in international politics. At times it wants to do slightly too much, covering too many debates, authors, and processes, but this is outweighed by its enthusiasm, in-depth knowledge, and understanding of the theoretical underpinnings of global politics. By drawing together the social, psychological, and moral thought of Elias and Jung in particular, with IR theory broadly defined, Steele succeeds in providing a rich and ethical account of power in a context of social and political relations.


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International trade is politically contentious. In studying this subject, scholars frequently probe the domestic distributional effects associated with trade and their ramifications for a variety of political phenomena, including the formation of political coalitions, lobbying behavior, electoral preferences, and, most recently, political polarization and the emergence of populism. In Trade Policy in Multilevel Government, Christian Freudlsperger expands the scope of inquiry, investigating how the degree of contentious politics between a national government and its subnational units (executives) affects the content of trade policy across time and space.

Building on Albert Hirschman’s seminal work, Exit, Voice, and Loyalty (1970), Freudlsperger advances a theory of the domestic institutions that enable multilevel political systems to organize openness in a globalized economy. He argues that the more “voice” a multilevel polity grants its constituent units (executives) in trade policy making (e.g., participation in trade negotiations), the less likely the latter are to eventually exit from trade agreements (i.e., to be more inclined to open their markets). The amount of voice that subnational executives enjoy is largely a function of domestic political institutions (e.g., council versus senate federalism, shared versus self-rule) and the degree of “vertical” decision-making processes (e.g., collaborative versus competitive). A subnational executive’s voice may