this decade is weak. However, if the second dimension were created by Peel's actions only in 1846, then most of the votes comprising the sample are from a period that precedes the time when Schonhardt-Bailey claims that a second dimension had emerged. And if most votes other than the votes on repeal did not engage this second dimension, then those votes also would be satisfactorily classified without the need to add a second dimension to the model.

The most significant contribution that this book makes to empirical work—and not just on the politics of international trade—is its innovative use of computerized content analysis of parliamentary speeches. The author's method relies on word counts and word associations, both of which are quantifiable and amenable to statistical analysis—for example, using a variant of factor analysis to dimensionalize the clusters of associated words. Her identifying tags on each utterance (speaker, party, issue, time) allow her to link each distinct cluster to individual MPs, parties, and interests. The discourse space she shows is generally two-dimensional, with one dimension political-versus-economic. (The other dimension is not labeled). As she notes, there are several possible sources of the difference between the dimensionalization of utterances and that of floor votes; a complete understanding of the relation between the two will require more research.

Although the title suggests a work intended primarily for students of trade policy, *From the Corn Laws to Free Trade* will probably have the most impact on comparative politics. It speaks to the evolution of party systems by documenting the fracturing of the Conservative Party in Commons; advances studies of lobbying and legislative politics by exploring the role of local newspapers as an influence on MPs' votes; sheds light on the relation of ideology to material interests by tracing ideological themes in members' speeches and relating them to party, constituency, and historical context; and explores statistical and substantive questions raised by various attempts to "dimensionalize" a national political system. (By contrast, international events are generally a background factor). In its breadth of theoretical and methodological coverage, and its efforts to break new ground in theorizing about and empirically examining the connections among discourse, institutions, and interests, this is a pioneering work that deserves to have a wide readership.

The European Union Decides. Edited by Robert Thomson, Frans N. Stokman, Christopher H. Achen and Thomas König. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006. 394p. $110.00 cloth, $39.99 paper.
DOI: 10.1017/S1537592708080432

— Mark Thatcher, *London School of Economics*

As a new and rapidly evolving polity, with clear formalized rules and a great deal of publicly available data, the European Union presents a fascinating object of study for political scientists. Until recently, it was often treated as sui generis, the preserve of dedicated Euro-watchers. Most attention was focused on grand events—treaties, judicial cases, and individual cases of specific interest. But increasingly, the general tools of political science are being brought to bear on the EU and its activities, including humdrum ones.

This book contributes to that literature by studying the outcomes of 66 European Commission legislative proposals for directives or regulations, which are detailed, technical, and very specific. It seeks to test different general formal or rational choice theories of legislative decision making derived from political science to see which offers the greatest predictive power. In particular, it pits procedural models that use decision-making rules and formal procedures against bargaining models that emphasize informal negotiations before formal legislative procedures begin (although such bargaining takes place under the shadow of formal rules for decision making) and a third group of mixed models that combine both bargaining and procedural games.

The research design is simple but powerful. Seven chapters use the same data set of the 66 proposals (themselves divided into issues, leading to a data set of a maximum of 162 issues). Information about matters such as actors' positions, outcomes, and votes was gathered from different sources, including a panel of experts. Thereafter, each chapter compares the predictions of its model, or two or three models, against the legislative outcomes. Most chapters also seek to offer one or two case study illustrations, looking at particular directives. The final chapters compare the predictive power of the different models both among themselves and with two baseline models using the mean and the median of the different actors' positions.

The central conclusion is that in general, bargaining models offer the strongest predictions, whereas procedural and mixed ones fare less well. Thus, confining analysis to formal procedures misses major elements of decision making. But, an additional and disquieting conclusion is that these models perform only slightly better than the baseline model based on the mean of the actors' positions, an analysis that requires little development and is not based on any theory.

The chapters are often admirably honest in their evaluation of their particular model. Thus, for instance, Stefanie Bailer and Gerald Schneider accept that the differences between a baseline Nash bargaining game model and more sophisticated versions are small, Thomas König and Sven-Oliver Proksch find that the procedural exchange model they favor does no better than competing models, while Mika Widgren and Antti Pajala argue that detailed modeling of the voting procedures actually reduces the accuracy of predictions. The evaluating chapter by Christopher Achen is also clear and transparent in its compar-

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ison of different models and its somewhat devastating conclusion of the limited gains of models compared to the baselines.

The book illustrates both the positive features of the new generation of EU studies and their limitations. It offers valuable cumulation by using existing work on legislative studies. Equally, it achieves a remarkable degree of coherence through its analysis of a common data set and the ability to appraise different explanations, a rare feature in political science. The chapters have a clear objective linked to theory, namely, showing the predictive power of theoretically derived models. The data set is impressive and is representative of EU legislative decision making. There is great rigor, with limitations of the data set and models explicitly acknowledged. Although quantitative analysis is dominant, case studies of individual pieces of legislation are set out, and Achen explicitly argues that case studies remain valuable in identifying explanatory factors and formulating tentative generalizations, and also as illustrations of theory.

But the book also faces important difficulties. The overall conclusion that many models perform less well than baseline nontheoretically derived ones suggests that much of the theorizing has actually produced less accurate predictions than nontheoretical work. Although the evaluating chapter by Achen seeks to defend this in terms of other domains where for many years a similar position held, it does call into question the resources and effort poured into developing so many sophisticated models of EU legislative decision making—and whether they would have been better applied to other domains in which surprising outcomes and explanations could have been found. König and Proksch end their analysis by suggesting rather plaintively that the failure of its models to offer better predictions "seem[s] to confirm the scepticism about empirical research in general and comparative testing of models in particular" (p. 235). In addition, the models are dense—the overview offered by the penultimate chapter would have been better placed at the start in order to allow readers to quickly understand groups of models. Equally, the case studies work only partially: It is often unclear what insight each model would bring to the particular case. Finally, and perhaps unfairly, the work is very dry: Many of the illustrations underline just how technical EU decision making is—cases such as the scrap-build penalty for fisheries or a directive on ballasts in electric lighting seem designed to bear down on even the most ardent Euro-scholar.

All the same, *The European Union Decides* is a highly rigourous book that has an impressive research design and execution. It will be suitable for advanced scholars of the EU and of legislative politics in general. It serves as an excellent example of the advantages and difficulties of modeling and data analysis.

America's Kingdom: Mythmaking on the Saudi Oil Frontier. By Robert Vitalis. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005. 392p. $29.95.
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— Gregory P. Nowell, *State University of New York, Albany*

Though formally a work of comparative politics, Robert Vitalis's book occupies the small niche of interesting if impressionistic social science works that includes Mike Davis's *City of Quartz* (1990) and James Scott's *Seeing Like a State* (1998). Insights abound, but this book is not designed to test a corpus of theory. The focus is Aramco's operations in Saudi Arabia, from their inception to the mid-1960s. Using corporate source documents in Saudi archives, Vitalis has created a window into the structural racism that pervaded Aramco's operations in Saudi Arabia in its early years.

We may divide the meandering presentation of *America's Kingdom* into three core themes. The first theme is the political economy and sociology of enclave economies, which is developed through an analysis of U.S. mining operations in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century in the American Far West and Latin America. The second theme is what happens when these established practices are grafted onto the specifically Saudi environment, which gives the book its name. At this level of analysis, the book studies the politics of Saudi resistance to the construction of a racist American petroleum enclave. This resistance is difficult to untangle because the family structure of the Saudi ruling class turns a nominal class struggle into a fight between members of the royal family and factions within a nascent middle-class technocracy.

The third theme is the construction of an ideology of dominance in the United States; the vehicle for analyzing this is a political and literary biography of novelist Wallace Stegner's virtually unknown corporate history of the oil industry's development in Saudi Arabia, a book commissioned by Aramco. Stegner's *Discovery! The Search for Arabian Oil* (1971) was forced into an unusual publishing venue for a Pulitzer Prize winner at the peak of his career, the Beirut Middle East Export Press. The political significance of Stegner's struggle with Standard Oil is that the novelist wanted, in the 1960s, to publish the story that Vitalis now tells. Vitalis uses Stegner's conflicts with Standard Oil as an indirect indicator of the intensely racist and ideologically charged American political environment. Stegner's saga neatly ties the third theme of racist political culture to the previous themes of political economy.

Vitalis's account debunks corporate propaganda and sometimes accords it more attention than it merits: The Aramco corporation did start the myth that it introduced agriculture to Saudi Arabia, but the myth is a long-standing object of derision: In 1951, Douglas Crary ("Recent Agricultural Developments in Saudi Arabia," *Geographical Review* 41[July]: 366–83) lampooned the myth,

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