The Middle East Process and the EU: Foreign Policy and Security Strategy in International Politics

Taylan Özgür Kaya, I.B Tauris, New York, 2013, 266 Pages.

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In this ambitious work, Taylan Özgür Kaya, assistant professor of international relations at Necmettin Erbakan University in Turkey, endeavors to ascertain what roles that the EU claims for itself in the peace making processes, especially in the Middle East Peace Process (MEPP), while also attempting to designate the level of congruity between what the EU expresses and what the EU performs as a political entity.

The book consists of six parts. The first part is the introduction in which Kaya sets the framework, giving information about the questions that he seeks to answer part by part, his aim of research, and the structural organization of the book. He indicates that due to a vital and unexpected gap left by academicians and researchers in the field of EU politics, he strives to fill that space by focusing on the importance of the role conception mechanism to provide a more precise tool of analysis that facilitates the work of foreign policy makers. The second part is the "Theoretical Framework for the Analysis" that clarifies the concept of role theory and his application thereof, as well as the research methodology conducted to convey his fundamental messages. The third part is entitled "EU's Foreign and Security Policy: Role Conceptions in the Post-9/11 International Security Environment". This part identifies self-conceptualized roles of the EU in six different categories, namely, force of good, force for international peace, security, and stability, provider of development aid, promoter of its values and norms, promoter of effective multilateralism,

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partner for the UN and builder of effective partnership with key actors of the post-9/11 period. Kaya puts emphasis on the shifting role conceptions of the EU based on his analysis of the EU's high officials' speeches and EU documents relevant to foreign policy and security strategy. The fourth chapter introduced by Kaya is "A Historical Overview: the EC/EU's Involvement in the Arab-Israeli Conflict and the MEPP in the Pre-9/11 Era". In this chapter, Kaya comprehensively examines the position of the EU in the Arab-Israeli conflict and its historical stance in the MEPP from the 1970s up to the 1990s.

With regard to this chapter, his intention is to "uncover the change and continuity in the EU's policy"(62). The fifth chapter is "Levels of Congruity: The EU's Role Conceptions and Role Performance in the MEPP in the Post-9/11 Era". Here, he looks at the effectiveness and multi-dimensional aspects of the EU in the realm of peace-making processes, particularly in the MEPP. According to Kaya, this chapter exposes the EU's foreign policy mechanism in terms of its level of congruity between the practice and discourse of high officials of the EU within the peace talks. Lastly, he briefly touches upon his main thesis that the objective of the book is to evaluate the EU's foreign policy with the help of role theory, which questions the self-defined role conceptions and role performance of the EU's foreign policy as an overarching political establishment.

The book is a unique example of its kind that features significant coverage of role conceptions of the EU, and contributes to our knowledge by differentiating between the actual roles that EU holds and virtual roles, which the EU claims to hold. For instance, regarding "the force of good" as one of the discussed self-images of the EU within the context of MEPP, the book offers a clear paradigm about the conflicting character of the EU. Kaya firstly argues that the EU's actions in the peace process served to benefit the people in the region as well as international peace, security, and stability in general, yet he then formulates a counter-argument to the EU's self-image as a "force of good" by highlighting that the EU imposed sanctions on the democratically elected Palestinian government while refraining from imposing sanctions on Israel even though it engaged in mass violations of human rights and international humanitarian law and overlooked ethical considerations.

Another example of this as observed throughout the book, particularly with respect to the MEPP, is the case of the EU's role conception as "the provider of development aid", which denotes a function in the provision of assistance to developing countries facing extreme poverty, hunger, malnutrition, and

pandemics. Firstly, it is mentioned in the book that the EU is one of the largest donors of financial and technical aid to the MEPP and this aid catalyzed the creation of an independent, economically and politically viable, sovereign, and democratic Palestinian state. On the other hand, looking at the big picture, it is seen that this aid effort of the EU resulted in its preemption of Israel's humanitarian duties to the Palestinian people under international law, thus easing the way for Israel to maintain the occupation of Palestinian territories rather than finding a permanent solution to the conflict.

In spite of the favorable aspects of the book mentioned above, it falls short of the academic objectivity that one may expect while reading it. Specifically, Kaya evaluates the level of congruity between the self-imagined roles of the EU and its actual practices on the basis of decisions taken by the EU in the MEPP, which particularly focuses on the EU's effectuality vis-à-vis the Palestinian side. The book unintentionally or intentionally overlooks the fact that the EU as a political entity has to pursue a strategy that should provide equal affinity to the satisfaction of both sides. To illustrate, Kaya indicates that the EU's policy of sanctioning the democratically elected so-called Hamas government is a point where the EU supposedly comes into conflict with its role conception of being a "force for good". However, he does not share the information about the damage inflicted by Hamas, seen in the many civilian casualties in Israel. Thus, even if the EU had given support to Hamas, or had at least not imposed sanctions on it, it would also have been contradicting its role within the conception of a "force for good". The one-sided approach to the categorization of self-identified roles of the EU in the MEPP may be an unfavorable factor that undermines the credibility of the book for the readers expecting a higher level of neutrality.

On the other hand, it would not be wrong to point out that in terms of the reliability of the sources that Kaya employs, the book creates a good impression and fulfills the criteria of credibility through the use of strong primary sources such as the declarations made by the EU's high officials and the documents published by related EU institutions. This permits readers to acknowledge the roles that the EU has shaped for itself. Furthermore, analysis of these documents and speeches is done in a very detailed manner, thus enabling readers interested in a mass coverage to be deeply engaged in specific cases that are not covered in most of the other books concerning involvement of the EU in the MEPP.

Overall, I would recommend *The Middle East Process and The EU: Foreign Policy and Security Strategy in International Politics* written by Taylan Özgür Kaya for those who are willing to discover the EU's self-conceptualized roles and its actual presence in peace-making processes, particularly the MEPP. In my opinion, the book is very thoughtful, and it stimulates the minds of its readers despite containing some of the credibility and objectivity issues that I mentioned above.