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

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Since the nine members of the European Community issued the Venice Declaration in 1980, the European Union (EU) has been actively involved in the Arab-Israeli conflict. Venice Declaration marks the shift in the political discourse of the European Community member states as they tried to carry declaration policies of 1970s one step further for more active involvement in the Middle East Peace Process (MEPP). Yet, despite the consistent and growing efforts of European involvement in the region, the corruption of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) executives, political division of Palestinians, escalating violence, the US and Israeli attempts to slide the EU in political arrangements concerning Israeli and Arab conflict undermined the efforts of the EU in the Middle East. All these developments that weakened the efforts of the EU in the MEPP requires extensive reflection on where EU political discourse has met the objectives and expectations or fallen short.

In *The Middle East Peace Process and the EU*, Kaya highlights the complex historical background of the European involvement in the Arab-Israeli conflict while attempting to answer whether there is a congruity/incongruity between the EU's self-identified role conceptions and its actual role performance in the MEPP between 2001 and 2006. Unlike many foreign policy analyses about the EU, Kaya used role theory in order to assess 'effectiveness, efficiency and credibility' (p. 25) of the EU as a foreign policy actor. The selected period reflects the change in the international system and the response of the EU to these changes. Like the end of the Cold War, 9/11 incidents have had important consequences on the EU's role conception, as EU endeavored to react as a sole foreign and security policy actor with their member states. Kaya highlighted the foreign policy speeches of the principal EU executives, who were responsible for security and foreign policy matters, to analyze the self-identified role conceptions of the EU. Moreover, Kaya evaluated the EU's self-identified role conceptions and its actual role within the framework of role theory. Even though the book is concerned with the post 9/11 era, it also gives extensive information about the EU's stance on the MEPP before 9/11 era and provides strong analyses that were proven right with the events in the post 2006 period.

In the first chapter, structure of the book is neatly explained. To make an analysis and connection to the research questions that will follow up about the EU as a foreign and security policy actor in the post 9/11 context, the author gives us a brief historical context.

In the second chapter, Kaya makes a detailed literature review to frame theoretical basis of the book. Since the book is based on Kaya's PhD thesis, the literature review on the role theory is very rich and can be used as a reference for both undergraduate and postgraduate students. In this detailed literature review, it had been suggested that role theory has great advantages in linking micro to the macro unit of analysis as content analysis based on the speeches of executives that establishes role conception of the EU, a broader body. This linkage provides readers a critical reading of what the EU committed and performed in the context of the Middle East.

Chapter three starts with the definition of the 'EU's role set in the post-9/11 era'. Kaya distinguishes seven roles for the EU from content analysis which are force for good, force for international peace, security and stability, promoter of its values and norms, promoter of



effective multilateralism, partner of the UN, builder of effective partnership with key actors. The most important finding of this chapter is the relation between the role conceptions, as they are not separate from each other rather they are firmly intermingled.

Throughout the fourth chapter the author analyzes the involvement of the EU in the Arab-Israeli conflict and MEPP thoroughly to make sense of the EU's foreign policy. The chronological structure of the chapter helps readers to understand and evaluate the progress of the EU's foreign policy and the role performance in the peace process. During this historical review Kaya aimed to uncover change and continuity in the EU's foreign policy. After losing their prominent role to the US and Soviet Union in the Middle East, major European powers tried to form a united foreign policy as a joint entity in order to re-engage in the Arab-Israeli conflict. European states chose declaratory policies towards the conflict from 1970s to 1990s, and they took Israeli-Palestinian issue as the core of the regional conflicts and announced multiple declarations to solve this issue. These early declarations form the basis of the EU's stance in the MEPP. These declarations show that the EU has a consistent and progressive foreign policy towards the MEPP. Since then, in every declaration the EU had been highlighting that the self-determination of the Palestinian people as the major problem in the region. Finally, the critical point that can be implied from this chapter is the EU's supplementary role as they were sidelined from the major political talks by the US and Israel and the growing EU influence in the economic and technical aspects in the MEPP after the 1990.

After 9/11 the EU became one of the pivotal actors together with the US, Russia and the UN as part of the Quartet on the Middle East. With its huge financial assistance to the PLO and its membership to the Quartet, the EU became a key actor and played more assertive role in the every dimension of the peace process. In the first part of the chapter five, Kaya outlines the involvement of the EU in the MEPP to analyze the congruity between the role conceptions and actual role performance of the EU. In the second part of the chapter, he analyzes congruity/ incongruity between the role conceptions derived from the content analysis and the actual political action in the MEPP context. Even author argued that there had not been an 'apparent conception-performance gap' (p.228) in the EU's foreign and security policy, he criticizes the EU's inability to 'balance its material interest and ethical considerations, act as coherent actor and speak with one voice' (p.222-223).

Overall the book is clearly structured and in-depth searched piece that provides valuable historical overview of the progress of the EU's foreign policy stance in the Arab-Israeli conflict.

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