

## Book Review

Taylan Özgür Kaya, *Necmettin Erbakan University*

---

### THE EUROPEAN UNION AND OCCUPIED PALESTINIAN TERRITORIES: STATE-BUILDING WITHOUT A STATE

**Author: Dimitris Bouris**

Much of the literature on the EU's role in Israeli-Palestinian peace-making examines the EU's initiatives in the fields of 'high politics' and diplomatic activity, areas in which the EU has a limited role in comparison to when it uses its economic tools, including the provision of aid. Dimitris Bouris's book touches upon an under-researched topic in the literature on the EU's role in Israeli-Palestinian peace-making and considers how effectively the EU has utilised state-building as a tool for peace-building in the case of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict.

In testing the effectiveness of the EU as a state-builder in the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPTs), Bouris focuses not only on the EU's initiatives in the areas of 'high politics', diplomatic activity and partnership/provision of aid, but also on security sector reform (SSR), judiciary sector reform (JSR) and the rule of law, which have been essential components of the EU's state-building policies in the OPTs. In order to assess the effectiveness of the EU's initiatives in each sector in a comprehensive manner, which means embracing both the process and the end product, he employs convincing and innovative assessment criteria, including legitimacy output, coherence and the regulation of violence/capacity for enforcement.

The book comprises a brief introduction and six chapters, which are well written and clearly structured. The first chapter provides a rigorous overview of the relevant literature on the concepts of liberal peace, liberal peace-building and state-building and their critiques, and serves as a bridge for the second chapter, which debates the EU's unique role in the state-building project. The second chapter offers an illustrative discussion of the EU's distinctive role as a state-builder and provides a highly informative appraisal of those tools, policies and mechanisms available to the EU as a state-building actor. This section also offers a concise analysis of the EU's role as a state-builder in two 'contested statehood' cases: Bosnia Herzegovina and Kosovo. The chapter also sets novel assessment criteria, including generation of legitimacy, coherence and the regulation of violence/capacity for enforcement for analysing the effectiveness of the EU as a state-builder in the OPTs. Based on these innovative criteria, chapters three, four and five examine the effectiveness of the EU's state-building initiatives in the OPTs in the areas of 'high politics', diplomatic activity, economic tools, provision of aid and partnerships, SSR, JSR and the rule of law.

The third chapter begins by providing a concise historical overview of the EU's involvement in the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict in the area of 'high politics' and diplomatic activity. The author also critically assesses the EU-Israeli special relationship, which is based on a solid economic partnership. Furthermore, the chapter presents a brief overview of the EU's state-building efforts in the OPTs from the 1993 Oslo Accords to the 2009 Fayyad Plan. In his evaluations, the author provides an analysis of the effectiveness of the EU's efforts in its high politics, diplomatic activity, economic tools and provision of aid and partnerships. Despite the informative analysis, there are some drawbacks, for instance in the section covering the EU's involvement in high politics and diplomatic activity, which is

not directly linked to the EU's state-building efforts in the OPTs. Ultimately, Bouris stops here at providing a historical overview of the EU's involvement in the Israeli-Palestinian peace-making process and does not connect this to an assessment of the effectiveness of the EU's state-building policies. Moreover, the effectiveness of the EU's financial aid to Palestinians, which has been a major component of the EU's involvement in Israeli-Palestinian peace-making, is not adequately examined. Thus, the chapter would have benefited from an extended and enriched analysis that addressed these significant points.

The fourth chapter provides a detailed and considered examination of the EU's efforts to promote SSR in the OPTs. Within this context, the analysis examines the EU's two civilian European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP) missions, the EU Coordination Office for Palestinian Police Support (EUPOL COPPS) and the EU Border Assistance Mission for Rafah Crossing Point (EUBAM Rafah). The chapter succeeds in shedding light on limitations the EU has faced in carrying out SSR, which inhibits its success as a state-builder. The lack of local ownership and unresponsiveness to the local needs of the Palestinians and the 'Israeli security first' approach to the SSR in the OPTs, which prioritises counter-terrorist capability-building over a genuine SSR, are identified as constraining factors on the effectiveness of the two ESDP missions carried out within the context of SSR. The EU's preference to act as a passive follower of the US and Israeli policies, which has been regarded as one of the main factors causing the relegation of the EU to a secondary actor in the Israeli-Palestinian peace-building process, are once again highlighted in the context of SSR. It is argued that the EU's SSR approach moved from a gradualist, long-term, reformist method aiming to transform security institutions into more democratically accountable institutions, to a short term 'restructurist' policy that is mainly advocated by the USA and Israel (p. 127). Bouris argues also that this approach gives rise to the EU's prioritisation of 'good governance' over 'democratization' in its approach to the Palestinian reform process and also to the provision of unconditional support to a 'not democratically elected' and illegitimate Palestinian government in the West Bank, thereby contributing to the current 'democratic deficit' in the West Bank.

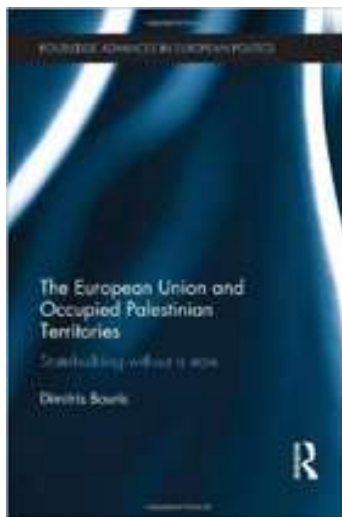
The fifth chapter provides a thorough appraisal of the EU's efforts to promote JSR and the rule of law in the OPTs. The author provides a detailed analysis of the Seyada Programme for JSR in the OPTs and the rule of law section of EUPOL COPPS. It is argued that the EU has enjoyed success in responding to local needs and increasing coherence between Seyada and the rule of law section of EUPOL COPPS, which increases the effectiveness of EU initiatives in JSR. That said, the Israeli occupation and the democratic deficit in the West Bank are identified as constraining factors on the effectiveness of JSR initiatives in the OPTs. The chapter succeeds in revealing a general weakness of the EU's state-building approach, which undermines its effectiveness as a state-builder - its technically orientated and politically constrained approach prioritising institution-building and capacity-building over improvement of democratic civilian oversight and accountability (p. 162).

There are three main strengths to the book. The first lies in the rich empirical data achieved through the substantial amount of semi-structured interviews (100 interviews) carried out by the author with EU, Palestinian and Israeli officials, academics and civil society members in Brussels, Jerusalem, Ashkelon and Ramallah during his field research in 2010 and 2013. Presenting official and unofficial insights from the EU (internal perceptions) and Israelis/Palestinians (external perceptions), which are termed as 'voices from the field', offers a more accurate and comprehensive understanding of the effectiveness of the EU's state-building policies in the OPTs. The second is the book's success in basing its empirical study on primary sources, mainly interviews and official documents, which enables triangulation and enhances the reliability of the empirical data. The third is its innovative assessment criteria for testing the effectiveness of the EU as a state builder, which offer useful tools for future research on the EU's state-building policies in 'contested statehood' cases.

The main weakness of the book is that although it aims to test the effectiveness of the EU's state-building initiatives in the OPTs since the Oslo Accords (1993), the Oslo years (1993-2000) remain under-examined. The book predominantly assesses the effectiveness of the EU's state-building initiatives such as EUPOL COPPS, EUBAM Rafah and Seyada programme, which belong to the last decade, not the Oslo years. Throughout the book, the Oslo years are presented as a historical background of state building in the OPTs rather than part of the assessment of the effectiveness of the EU's state-building policies.

To sum up, despite its limitations, the book provides a balanced and well-founded assessment of the EU's distinctive role as a state-builder in the OPTs. It succeeds in shedding light on what it is that limits the effectiveness of the EU's state-building policies in the OPTs. Therefore, it provides valuable lessons for EU policy-makers on how to deal with these limitations and increases the potential effectiveness of the EU's state-building policies. In addition to EU policy-makers, the book will also be highly informative for students and scholars with interests in EU foreign and security policy, or with an area of specific interest, either in the EU's role in the Israeli-Palestinian peace-making process, or in the EU's role as state-builder in 'contested statehood' cases, like the OPTs.

\*\*\*



#### BIBLIOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

The European Union and Occupied Palestinian Territories: State-Building without a State

Author: Dimitris Bouris

Routledge, 2013

ISBN: 978-0415837095 (hardback), 140.00 USD, 214 pages

Other formats: 978-1315851303 (ebook)