

AMIR M. KAMEL, *The Political Economy of EU Ties with Iraq and Iran: An Assessment of the Trade–Peace Relationship*, *The Political Economy of the Middle East* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015). Pp. 241. \$115.00 cloth. ISBN: 9781137439796

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doi: [10.1017/S002074381700023X](https://doi.org/10.1017/S002074381700023X)

The evolution of European Union (EU)–Gulf relations has been the object of study of a number of works, which have tended to focus on its political, geopolitical, and energy dimensions. Few studies have dealt with EU bilateral trade relations with Iran and Iraq. Amir Kamel’s *The Political Economy of EU Ties with Iraq and Iran* is a valuable contribution to this literature. Kamel aims at assessing and analyzing the extent to which the development of European foreign policy under the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP), which from the 1992 Maastricht Treaty, and until the Lisbon Treaty, substituted the previous European Political Cooperation and set forth a pathway for further coordination among European member states over their foreign and security policy decisions, has changed the practice of European trade relations with these countries and the political impact of these economic relations.

Kamel begins his examination by outlining what he calls “the trade-through-peace approach” as it was formulated by European thinkers, mostly from the 18th century onwards. Starting with Immanuel Kant’s 1795 *Perpetual Peace*, in which he identified the preconditions for world peace as economic interdependence, international law, and sharing values, the book challenges the positive-sum literature on trade and peace. This literature was further expanded on the one hand by liberal international relations scholars who correlated the creation of absolute gains produced by interdependence and the maintenance of peace, and on the other by realist thinkers who underlined the dangers of relative gains by states that acted according to selfish interests, similarly to what the mercantilist tradition has held. The book then sharpens the lens to focus on how this principle has been embedded in EU foreign policy. Interestingly, rather than analyzing the role of the European Commission Directorate General for Trade, considered to be the main EU actor for trade policy since the early 1990s and epitomizing the depoliticization of European commercial policy, or the European Parliament, which since the Lisbon Treaty that entered into force in December 2009 has increased its powers even in trade-related matters, the author has concentrated on what is regarded as the realm of the EU supranational foreign policy locus, the CFSP, the heart of its political, rather than economic, global diplomacy. The thesis of the book refers to one of the CFSP overarching normative foreign policy goals: promoting peace abroad. In order to illustrate this argument, the author scrutinizes EU–Iran and EU–Iraq relations between 1979 and 2009 and uses the conflicts involving these two countries as examples illustrating the failure of European foreign economic policy to diffuse peaceful norms. The author aims to disprove the “peace-through-trade” theory applied to the CFSP by showing the extent to which the EU’s trade policy never promoted peace in the two countries (with “peace” suffering from an excessively broad understanding, encompassing a broad range of meanings, from human rights and national security to poverty reduction). The illustration of the EU’s trade policies with these two countries, which share some similarities (geographical position, oil reserves) but many more differences (i.e., a revolutionary Islamic Republic on the one hand, a secular dictatorship on the other hand) aims at corroborating the argument that domestic features of third countries do not strongly correlate with the EU’s success in complying with its normative orientation aimed at promoting peace and human rights abroad. In order to make the case for the EU realpolitik attitude in foreign policy, the book not only compares the two cases but does so before and after the emergence of the CFSP in 1992,

which, according to many, including the author, could have led the EU to develop a transformative and goal-oriented foreign policy.

While the book accurately traces the EU–Iran and Iraq bilateral political and economic relations, the heuristic potential of this description could have been strengthened by reference to a more solid theoretical argument. The lack of peace between Iran and Iraq in the 1980s, the invasion of Kuwait by Iraq in 1990, and the lack of respect for human rights in both countries are all blamed on the lack of consistency in the EU trade policy. In other words, the shortcomings of the CFSP are causally linked to the lack of progress in peace in and among the two countries. Peace is also broadly understood, in Galtung-derived terms, as absence of structural violence, without further operationalization. This methodological approach strikes the reviewer as being vulnerable to a number of criticisms, from indeterminacy to lack of falsifiable statements to underspecification of the mechanisms that should be responsible for explaining the causal dynamic between trade policy and war. It is the most significant shortcoming of the book and one that diminishes the potential of its overall analytical power and its innovative approach focused on the political economy of (supposedly) normative foreign policy.

The book attempts to disprove the “peace-through-trade” approach, long debated within several strands of literature, including political economy, international political economy, international relations theory, and security studies. The political economy literature often relies on the ratio between trade and gross domestic product to operationalize the relative dependence of an economy on trade and hence its possibility of being influenced by external actors. This literature also distinguishes between different forms and sectors of trade: on the one hand, it analytically separates highly politically sensitive aspects of trade (such as arms sales) from low ones, while on the other it problematizes the agential aspect by looking at the winners and losers of trade relations and of possible conflicts. The book would have benefitted from adopting these specifications rather than subsuming all EU trade relations within one single category. In particular, it would have represented a great added value if different trade constituencies within the EU and in different European member states had been taken into account. The role and behavior of lobbies and interest groups pushing for trade openings between the EU and the two countries namely remains underdeveloped in the book.

The book would also have greatly profited from being more closely tied to the literature on how the European Commission and the European Parliament have seen their role change in EU trade policies over time and how this affected the evolution of the CFSP. Coupled with this, on a vertical level, a more systematic account of key EU member states’ economic relations with Iran and Iraq vis-à-vis CFSP policies would have provided a richer picture of European external relations in this area.

Nevertheless, Kamel’s work is a highly useful reference for students and scholars interested in Gulf economic policies and particularly trade. The international politics of the Gulf and Euro–Gulf relations are examined through the prism of trade policy, which is a welcome contribution to the fields of European foreign policy studies and International Relations of the Middle East.

The excellent use of charts and graphs helps illustrate the nature of EU–Iran and EU–Iraq economic and commercial relations and contributes to the smooth flow of information and narrative about the evolution of these relations. The use of sources, while strong on the quantitative side, could have been enriched through more diversified qualitative sources, such as speeches, discursive texts, and interviews.

This review must not end on a skeptical note: the topic of EU trade relations with Gulf countries in historical perspective is convincing, as well as the frequent contradictions of European foreign policy in the region, torn between different and often contradictory interests. It is important that further studies take up Kamel’s attempt to crossfertilize various branches of literature from

international political economy, international relations, and European studies, applying their insights to a more interdisciplinary understanding of Euro–Middle Eastern relations.

ANAHEED AL-HARDAN, *Palestinians in Syria: Nakba Memories of Shattered Communities* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2016). Pp. 262. \$60.00 cloth, \$59.99 e-book. ISBNs: 9780231176361, 9780231541220

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*Palestinians in Syria* is a well-researched, timely contribution to scholarship on refugees, memory, and the *nakba*. The work enhances our understanding of the construction of a national community in exile through the intergenerational transmission of loss and dispossession. It comes at a moment when the Palestinian community in Syria is facing further displacement as a result of the ongoing civil war. Anaheed Al-Hardan examines the ways in which the unique experience of Palestinians in Syria created a community that was integrated in Syrian life, yet maintained the status of refugee under the supervision of The *United Nations Relief and Works Agency* for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA). At the same time the Palestinian refugees remained committed to the Palestinian national liberation movement. Yet, the shifting intellectual, collective, and national meaning of the *nakba* remains the background against which Al-Hardan illustrates how loss and dispossession are experienced across generations. The book examines how and why Palestinians in Syria continue to view their lives through the prism of dislocation more than sixty years after their initial forced removal from historic Palestine. While Al-Hardan's contribution is valuable for merely enhancing the sparse literature on Palestinians in Syria and augmenting nascent *nakba* studies, it also enriches the scholarship on memory and history, narrating the self, and community construction among refugees.

Al-Hardan does an excellent job examining the Arab intellectual origins of the *nakba*, tracing its evolution as a pan-Arab nationalist discourse and its eventual appropriation by the Palestinian national movement. She concisely demonstrates how over the years the events of 1948 have been revisited by successive generations of Arab and Palestinian intellectuals and political activists for how these events continue to inform the present. The revival of interest in *nakba* stories among Palestinians in Syria increased significantly after the signing of the Oslo Accords in 1993 and fueled the emergence of the Right of Return movement. Al-Hardan is at her best when she analyzes the ways in which the *nakba* has been reinterpreted by ordinary Palestinians as a means of maintaining a sense of community after almost seventy years in exile and with no end in sight. By illustrating the Nakba's "universe of discourse" (p. 27), she not only subverts traditional scholarship on the *nakba* by engaging with Arab writings rather than privileging Western sources (p. xiv), but demonstrates its implication for ordinary Palestinians. This is where she deftly provides concrete examples for how national events impact and redefine quotidian experiences among ordinary Palestinians whose voices are often muted in official historical accounts. While Al-Hardan is quick to note that the traumatic events of 1948 were far from forgotten, it is the absence of a just solution to the plight of refugees that obliges each generation of Palestinians born in exile to affix their own understanding of displacement and dispossession as they attempt to maintain an affiliation to a "homeland" they have never seen (p. 49). Al-Hardan is most perceptive of how personalized the *nakba* becomes over time for Palestinian refugees who mourn the loss of the national homeland, and on a more intimate level their villages, land, trees, and communities. Yet the *nakba* and its narratives are not without controversy. As she notes, the controversy surrounding the survivors