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## **Book Review**

**Mesut Ozcan, *Harmonizing Foreign Policy: Turkey, the EU and the Middle East*, Ashgate Press, England, 2008, 191 p., ISBN: 978 0 7546 7370 5**

Turkish foreign policy has made a remarkable achievement in recent years, raising the influence of Turkey in surrounding critical regions, extending from the Balkans to the Middle East and as well as in international politics. With *Harmonizing Foreign Policy: Turkey, the EU and the Middle East*, Mesut Ozcan sets about to explicate a part of this picture, that is, the shift in Turkish foreign policy towards the Middle East, which, the author argues, becomes more visible in policies towards Iraq and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. 1999 is the beginning of the aforementioned shift, according to Ozcan, a year in which the EU gave Turkey a candidature status and Abdullah Ocalan, the leader and founder of the PKK, was arrested. This was also a year that provided Turkish decision makers with a democratic opening in foreign policy—a shift from security-oriented foreign policy to a democracy-oriented one. From that time onwards, Turkey, according to Ozcan, has been exposed to the process of Europeanization of foreign policy, a process that has taken Turkey away from a foreign policy under American influence.

The book consists of eight chapters, each of which sheds lights on a particular aspect of the EU and Turkish Foreign policies, extending from theories of the European Integration to the Europeanization of Turkish foreign policy. Although the main focus of the book is the changing nature of Turkish foreign policy towards the Middle East and the reasons behind it, Ozcan also focuses his attention on the theoretical discussions regarding the European integration and the

Europeanization of foreign policy, which constitute the theoretical background of the main subject matter. For those who want to read an introductory text about the theories of the EU integration and the Europeanization of foreign policies of member states, chapter one and chapter two are a good start.

The last four chapters of the book analyze Turkish foreign policy through different lenses, covering the historical underpinnings of Turkish foreign policy in general and the Middle East Policy of Turkey in particular. All chapters of the book are comprehensible to both specialists of the issues under investigation and laymen as well.

Ozcan argues, based on the theoretical arguments of Manner and Whitman, that Europeanization of Turkish foreign policy became possible by having gone through three phases: foreign policy change, foreign policy process, and foreign policy action. Ozcan also points out that Turkey, with having a candidature status since 1999, has experienced these three steps, steps that require a top-down relationship between the EU and the member or candidate states in terms of foreign policy adaptation.

Methodologically speaking, the independent variable of the book is the change in Turkish foreign policy towards Iraq and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The variables that are considered to cause the mentioned dependent variable are the Turkish candidature to the EU and the arrest of Abdullah Ocalan in 1999. The cases used to explain the causal mechanism are the Iraqi war and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

I would like to raise two methodological issues connected to each other. First, although Ozcan makes intuitively appealing arguments about the change in Turkish foreign policy towards Iraq and Israeli-Palestinian problem, he does not provide a detailed analysis of both cases, which would lay out the causal mechanism explaining how the independent variables of the study led to the dependent variable.

If the author had discussed the changing Turkish foreign policy towards the cases of Iraq and Palestinian-Israeli conflict with the method of process tracing by leaving one chapter to each cases, it could have been more persuasive.

The second methodological concern includes uncontrolled variables in the book that could be considered as the causes of the aforementioned change. For example, one may argue that the aforementioned change in Turkish foreign policy is not a direct result of the changes in 1999 but the government change in 2002. What has been witnessed in Turkish foreign policy

since then are the result of the preferences of decision-makers of the new government. This rival explanation is not controlled in this study. In order to control this variable, the method of process-tracing is again required. If the author had controlled this rival explanation by tracing the process of change in details, then the arguments of the book could be more persuasive.

*Harmonizing Foreign Policy: Turkey, the EU and the Middle East* is a recent and valuable book on Turkish foreign policy. It, in a very successful way, analyzes the historical relations between Turkey and the EU, and underpinnings of the foreign policies of both actors as well. This book seems to be a must book for those who are intellectually and academically interested in Turkish foreign policy and its relations with the EU.

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