

IEUSS REVIEW OF BOOKS

DelSarto, Raffaella A. [Fragmented Borders, Interdependence and External Relations: The Israel-Palestine-European Union Triangle](#), Palgrave Macmillan, 2015.

This is a dense book not intended for those new to studying and understanding the complex situation involving Palestine, Israel, and the European Union (EU). It is intended to hopefully provide a “new perspective” on relations between the three entities. This it does while helping the reader to better understand the dominant narratives explaining what one contributor referred to as the “absurd” situation in this unique triangle involving a nation-state (Israel) with “fuzzy” boundaries (in its “accidental empire” created through “inclusive exclusions” throughout Palestine); territories (Palestine) with disaggregated (“contested, undefined, multiple, and fluid”) boundaries; and the EU with boundaries determined not by the entity itself but by its constituent member states and the activities (most notably the EU neighborhood policy whereby “neighbors” become “borderlands”) they undertake as part of the EU’s “variable border geometry.” The book argues for understanding boundaries rather than borders as a “borderlands approach” to this unique triangle. This design is well worth considering as it moves us from a strict Westphalian approach to nation-state borders into an evolving post-Westphalian model in which the EU is understood to be more than simply a partner to Palestinian development but rather into forming a post-modern empire in which Israel (and by extension Palestine) becomes a “member” of the EU one citizen at a time as some 300,000 Israeli citizens have dual citizenship. Israel is, in effect, already a “member” of the EU by accident or design whether the EU realizes it or not. These developments can be directly related to and seen as an outgrowth of (whether intended or not) the Oslo “peace” process.

After setting the framework in Chapter One the book is divided into three parts focusing in detail on three significant aspects of the triangle: “Security, Sovereignty and People”; “Economic Borders and Infrastructure”; and “Legal and Normative Borders.” Chapter 8 on Legal Foundations was perhaps the least helpful of the chapters for anyone interested in developing a better understanding of the current situation in the Palestinian territories and their complex relation with the EU and Israel. It is possible to get lost in the sea of details, but the overall effect of the book is to help the reader to understand a situation created by the EU as a self-described normative power establishing a potentially improved political and economic development, either by design

or unintentionally, in the Middle East through a “tyranny of small decisions.” The Palestinians bear the brunt of this with Palestinians living as best as they can under a system of imposed multiple borders in a “geography of exclusion/inclusion.” This book is well worth the attention of a reader interested in developing a more complex understanding of the triangle.

In summary, this book would not be suitable as a textbook for a beginner but would be an excellent resource for an expert, scholar and/or graduate student interested in developing a deeper understanding of the normative power of the EU as it confronts the reality of a difficult situation attempting to chart a better future.

Gregory P. Rabb
SUNY Jamestown Community College
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