Given the continuous presence of ethno-political conflicts in the European Union’s near abroad, Nathalie Tocci’s book is a timely and persuasive analysis of the impact and effectiveness of EU foreign policy on conflict resolution. Tocci draws upon the premise that EU contractual relations (e.g. accession process, stabilization and association agreements, partnership and cooperation, financial assistance, or the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) play a constructive role in conflict resolution. Yet she makes a critical assessment of the effectiveness of these relations by examining and comparing EU involvement in the resolution of five ethno-political conflicts that lie on or just beyond EU borders: Cyprus, Turkey’s Kurdish question, Serbia and Montenegro, Israel–Palestine, and Georgia’s secessionist conflicts.

Tocci’s analytical framework for her proposed assessment is noteworthy and offers an innovative tool of analysis for future comparative research on EU foreign policy in conflict resolution. The framework lays out three interrelated mechanisms through which EU contractual relations can influence ethno-political conflicts: 1) positive/negative or ex-ante/ex-post conditionalities which involve the promise of carrots in return for the fulfilment of a predetermined condition or the use of sticks in the event of the violation of a specified obligation; 2) social learning which targets domestic internationalization of EU norms and logic; 3) passive enforcement or rule application which requires the third party’s sense of belonging to Europe. She then indicates three factors which determine the effectiveness of these mechanisms. First, the value of the benefit factor which indicates that if the third parties perceive the potential gains as sufficiently high relative to the costs, then the EU can be effective on its neighbourhood foreign policy. Second, the credibility factor, i.e. the credibility of the EU in its capacity and willingness to carry out its declared commitments. Finally, Tocci points out that the EU needs to carry out a sound political management in its conflict resolution efforts.

In the light of her analytical framework and as a result of meticulous comparative analysis, Tocci reveals that the different contractual ties between the EU and the countries in conflict allow for different degrees of European impact on the resolution of conflicts. In countries with a prospect of European integration like Cyprus, Turkey, Serbia and Montenegro, the EU is more able to provide an alternative
framework within which ethno-political conflicts can be resolved. However, this does not mean that the integration process is the EU’s only effective conflict resolution mechanism. As Tocci’s findings in Palestine and Georgia demonstrate, financial assistance or the benefits foreseen in the ENP can also raise the EU’s influence. EU contractual relations can promote human rights, democracy, rule of law, civil society and regional cooperation; combat international crime; contribute to international security and a good socio-economic management. All these dimensions, in turn, contribute to conflict resolution. Finally, EU legal framework can complement the peacemaking efforts of other third parties like, for instance, the United Nations.

Despite these findings, however, Tocci’s concluding argument is that the EU’s impact on the resolution of the examined conflicts is far from satisfactory. The EU has not managed to contribute significantly or positively to reach its desired goals about the resolution of any of these conflicts. The main reason is that the EU lacks credible obligations accompanying valuable benefits, essential for the reputation of a non-state actor which bases its influence on being a ‘soft-power’. The EU is also unable to play into the balance of power logics present in these regions. Political determinants within the EU, such as the EU’s neglect of a particular conflict or national or EU-wide interests beyond conflict resolution, often dictate or influence the conduct of EU contractual relations. In sum, the pursuit of narrow and short-term interests often obstructs the EU’s potential to advance its long-term normative milieu goals.

Tocci’s very interesting and revealing concluding remarks lack, however, a deeper reflection and articulation on the nature of narrow, short-term interests and the ambiguities in EU foreign policy construction. The prevailing role of the member states’ national interests is not sufficiently elaborated. On page 22, Tocci mentions the clash between the different ways in which EU institutions deal with conflict resolution policies. She argues that while the Council of Ministers and the European Council declare their support for conflict resolution and European integration, the Commission, focusing on the latter, may reinforce secessionist trends. Thus the requirements dictated by the Commission often generate disincentives against conflict resolution. Fair enough as it is, at least for scholars who are familiar with the Commission’s shortcomings in conflict resolution, Tocci’s observation about the idiosyncrasies within the Union remains incomplete. She neglects to critically engage the role of the European Council decisions which usually hamper conflict resolution. After all, it is the Council which exercises executive functions in relation to the Common Foreign and Security Policy. Thus, for instance, it is the European Council which owns the major responsibility for the acceptance of the Republic of Cyprus’ accession to the EU, without any conditionalities on the Greek Cypriot side and the absence of a strong European commitment to Turkey’s membership, which in turn slows down, today, the reform process concerning the Kurdish question. It is also because of certain EU members’ national interests that the EU avoids antagonizing Russia and, therefore, is unable to launch an effective conflict resolution involvement in the Caucasus as a mediator. Nevertheless, given the need for research that focuses not only on the European
point of view in conflict resolution, but also on the facts and perceptions from beyond EU borders, *The EU and Conflict Resolution-Promoting Peace in the Backyard* is a significant contribution to EU foreign policy studies. Besides offering an innovative analytical framework and a scrupulous comparative analysis on major ethno-political conflicts within EU’s borders and near abroad, it stimulates scholars to further engage EU foreign policy shortcomings and ambiguities in conflict resolution.

*Emel Akçali*

*University of Birmingham, UK*

**Conflict and Cooperation: Christian–Muslim Relations in Contemporary Egypt**

Peter E. Makari

*Syracuse, NY, Syracuse University Press, 2007, ISBN 978-0-8156-3144-6 (hb), £17.50, pp.238*

The Christian communities in the contemporary Middle East remain an under-researched field in Middle Eastern Studies. Existing literature tends to fall into two categories – edited multidisciplinary volumes which cover a wide range of issues relating to the different Christian groups throughout the region and those which employ a country-specific approach. Of the latter, Egypt is a popular choice as it is home to the largest Christian community in the region, the Coptic Christians. There are 5–6 million Egyptian Christians of which the vast majority (over 90 per cent) belong to the Coptic Orthodox Church. There are also smaller Catholic and Protestant denominations. Rather than focusing solely on the dominant group, Peter E. Makari has replaced the popular denominational approach with a more inclusive analysis of Christian–Muslim relations, acknowledging that these should not be confined solely to relations between the Coptic Orthodox Church and the Muslim majority in Egypt.

This book represents a departure from the conventional view of Egyptian communal relations as being marred by ignorance, intolerance and violence. Instead, Makari stresses that dialogue, tolerance and harmony are also part of the equation. Indeed, it is these areas which are the subject of this book. For this reason, the inclusion of ‘Conflict and Cooperation’ in the title is rather misleading. Cooperation is central to the study while conflict is mentioned only in passing. In one sense, this is a weakness as sadly Christian–Muslim relations in Egypt do involve sporadic violent disturbances which are often motivated by the same recurring issues such as church building legislation, conversions and religious intolerance on both sides. It seems odd that a book on this subject does not seriously tackle such issues. Several times Makari himself acknowledges that his book does not offer a full overview of the situation in Egypt. For example, in the conclusion he states that ‘The preceding chapters have not in any way intended to minimize the perceptions of the lived realities of people in either community, nor have they attempted to demonstrate that
the situation in Egypt during Mubarak’s presidency has been void of any conflict or full of peace and harmony’ (p.190). Yet by not addressing these issues, *Conflict and Cooperation* could be interpreted as portraying Egyptian communal relations as being more harmonious than reality suggests and, as such, cannot be regarded as providing an accurate depiction of the situation of Christians in Egypt. However, this is not to detract from the author’s attempt to offer an alternative approach to studying the Christian community in Egypt. Media and academic coverage of the subject rarely mentions initiatives fostering good relations between the communities. Furthermore, most material on this issue is in the Arabic language only. By using these sources, Makari is able to address a new area. Hence, paradoxically, the strength of this work lies in its detailed analysis of one particular aspect of Christian–Muslim relations – the promotion of interfaith dialogue and understanding. It is this narrow focus which means that *Conflict and Cooperation* will become a useful addition to the scant material on Egypt’s Christians.

Makari sets his study against the backdrop of the debates on civil society, citizenship and tolerance, and demonstrates that the question of Christian equality and rights in Egypt cannot be studied in isolation but instead must be addressed within the wider context of democratization. Focusing on the issue of identity, he provides an overview of the various discourses regarding Coptic identity and its complex relationship with Arab identity. A historical discussion of Christian–Muslim relations in Egypt culminates in an in-depth exploration of several schools of thought regarding Egyptian history and identity, namely Egyptian, Mediterranean, African, Arab and Islamic, thus illustrating the competing and overlapping claims regarding identity.

The next chapters focus on inter-faith initiatives during the Mubarak era. The section on government initiatives provides an illuminating discussion of the ‘Reading for All’ campaign, a government-sponsored project to promote literacy and knowledge, which was championed by the wife of the Egyptian president, and included several books covering the Christian presence in Egypt. Addressing dialogue at the institutional level, Makari gives many examples the promotion of tolerance by Sheikh Tantawi, the sheikh of al-Azhar, including speeches, responses to outbreaks of communal violence and attendance at interfaith meetings. From the Christian viewpoint, the activities of the three Christian denominations are examined. Makari notes that the Coptic Catholic church is constrained by positions taken by the Vatican. The Coptic Orthodox Church personified by Pope Shenouda reinforces its position as the established church through cultivating good relations with the government. The Coptic Protestants tend to have an impact on inter-faith relations disproportionate to their small size.

Christian participation in political parties is also examined with particular emphasis on the policies of Hizb al-Wasat, a political party which failed to gain legal recognition but was established in the mid-1990s by individuals previously associated with the Muslim Brotherhood. This case study is of special interest as one of the co-founders, Rafiq Habib, was a Coptic Protestant, thus illustrating the ability of Christians to be involved in Islamic-oriented movements. The chapter on NGOs provides two detailed but different case studies of civil society – political activism
by the Ibn Khaldun Centre and social work by the Coptic Evangelical Organization for Social Services. The final chapter seeks to build on the themes of tolerance and dialogue by examining the response of the previously discussed actors to specific incidents. The increasingly important role of the Coptic diaspora is also noted. It is clear that the government and other societal actors are keen to avoid escalation of incidents. Makari tends to concentrate on the rhetoric espoused by the state and religious leaders rather than examining the actual actions taken to address the recurring problems. Yet harmonious communal relations in Egypt are also very dependent on actions not rhetoric. Thus, a crucial aspect of communal incidents is absent from the discussion. Conflict and Cooperation does not address these underlying causes behind communal tensions but instead provides a detailed account of the measures undertaken by multiple actors in Egypt towards fostering good relations between religious communities.

Fiona McCallum
University of St Andrews, UK

Civil Society and Political Change in Morocco
James N. Sater

Much has been written about political liberalization in Morocco, focusing mainly on the role of the monarchy vis-à-vis political parties, the Islamist movements and civil society in general. Sater’s new book is a welcome contribution to this field given the theoretically innovative angle through which the issue of political change is analysed. By using the concepts of public sphere and civil society, the book attempts to answer how new civil society organizations in Morocco arise and contribute to political change, broadly defined as ‘citizens’ increased participation in public affairs, which results in a redefinition of the relationship between the governors and the governed’ (p.1).

In choosing Habermas’ theoretical construct of public sphere, Sater moves away from traditional definitions of civil society, which define civil society either as in opposition to the state or as an intermediary between the state and society. Instead, he defines civil society as ‘the sphere between the state and the family, in which private citizens act on behalf of public issues, through which they constitute and shape the ever-changing borders of, and discourses within, the public sphere’ (p.10). This enables Sater to analyse how the states’ involvement in the discourses of the new organizations challenges the hegemony of the state, and how the state uses accommodation, appropriation, and boundary definition as a strategy for its involvement.

The focus on the public sphere makes it possible to analyse how changes within existing and new civil society organizations elicit changes in the attitude of the state.
The crucial issue is when civil society organizations start focusing on single issues and break away from the struggle between (opposition) political parties and the state. The organizations that focus on the issue of Berbers, women and human rights in general receive different treatment from the state when the state realizes the non-threatening, self-limiting nature of these organizations. The state attempts to influence the debates that are being pressed into the public domain by these organizations. It does this through, for example, setting up councils dealing with these issues. In doing so, the state broadens the scope of the public discourse and grants more legitimacy to the causes of these organizations.

The book is mainly concerned with single-issue organizations that are self-limiting and thus not power seekers. This excludes the Islamist movements. However, a more in-depth analysis of how the two main Islamist movements in Morocco dealt with the different issues raised by the new civil society organizations and how their participation in the public sphere affected the state’s responses would have strengthened the argument about how the state chooses between co-optation, integration and boundary setting. The inclusion of these movements’ response to the reform of the Moudawana (family code) shows how vital this element is in the state’s calculations. One would assume that a close analysis of the press linked to the Islamist movements would reveal their stance to other issues as well, and how this affects the public discourse.

In terms of methodology, when looking at how the state is involved in the public discourse through a newspaper analysis, one has to bear in mind that the press is not free in Morocco; an issue which is touched upon in sections of the book. Furthermore, by limiting the empirical analysis to newspapers published in French, the analysis misses what is being discussed in the Arabic newspapers read by a section of the population that is not part of the French-speaking elite.

In the historical overview, the colonial period is absent. Some scholars have shown interesting continuities between for example the agricultural policies of the French during the protectorate period and the policies of Moroccan governments after independence. Some of the strategies used by the French to control their protectorate were being used by the monarchy and its allies after independence in dealing with challenges to state hegemony. It is only briefly touched upon when referring to the inter-elite conflict as manifested in the urban–rural divide, exploited by the French and later by the monarchy.

Although in the preface the author defends not updating his doctoral thesis of 2003, on which the book is based, it would still have been useful if a postscript had been added. The fundamental conclusions do not change, but they would have been supported more strongly by adding some of the recent developments. For example, the creation in 2004 of the Equity and Reconciliation commission was of great importance to the human rights movement, and even with its shortcomings it further opened up the public discourse on torture and disappearances during the reign of the late King Hassan II. The changes in the family code that were introduced after the author finished his analysis were an important step forward in the struggle started by women’s movements years ago. Another update could have analysed the recent
developments regarding the employers’ federation. Saters’ analysis stops at a point when this formerly loyal organization asserted itself more independently of the state.

The book provides a detailed account of the various developments in the relationship between the state and civil society organizations, and it gives due account to the international, political and economic context in which these changes occurred. Taking a more historical view and including the 1980s in the discussion enriches the conclusion and enables the author to discern long-term trends. Supported by exhaustive evidence, he rightly concludes that ‘the structuring of Morocco’s public sphere had reinforced the pre-eminence of the state and had the effect of perpetuating the states’ ability to change its discursive hegemony whenever the political situation commanded it’ (p.167). The combination of a rigorous theoretical framework and a detailed analysis of the developments in the public sphere in Morocco over the past few decades makes this book a valuable addition to the literature on political change and could be useful for scholars working on other countries.

Farid Boussaid

Oxford University, UK